DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 461 472 RC 023 368

AUTHOR	Falk, Ian, Ed.
TITLE	Learning To Manage Change: Developing Regional Communities for a Local-Global Millennium.
INSTITUTION	National Centre for Vocational Education Research, Leabrook (Australia).
ISBN	ISBN-0-87397-752-1
PUB DATE	2001-00-00
NOTE	236p.
AVAILABLE FROM	For full text: http://www.ncver.edu.au/pubs/falk2001/index.htm.
PUB TYPE	Collected Works - General (020)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC10 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Community Change; *Community Development; *Education Work Relationship; Foreign Countries; Indigenous Populations; Informal Education; Job Training; Lifelong Learning; Nonformal Education; Rural Areas; Rural Development; *Rural Education; *Rural Youth; Social Capital; *Sustainable Development
IDENTIFIERS	Aboriginal Australians; Australia; *Capacity Building; Globalization

ABSTRACT

This book illustrates the benefits of integrating different approaches to community and regional development for rural Australia. The key theme is community capacity building through lifelong learning, seen as integration of formal, nonformal, and informal education and training at all levels. Other foci include the local-global context, issues related to learning for change, best practice in community learning, and specific issues of rural Aboriginal communities. The 24 chapters: "Challenges Facing Rural Regional Australia in New Times" (Ian Falk); "Regional Economic Decay and Regeneration under Structural Change" (Jerry Courvisanos); "Life beyond Economics: Learning Systems and Social Capital" (Richard Bawden); "Sustainability for Regional Development: Integrating the Models" (Barbara Geno); "Community Psychology, Planning and Learning: An Applied Social Ecology Approach to Sustainable Development" (Douglas Perkins); "Education as Economic and Individual Development: Toward Education through Occupations" (W. Norton Grubb); "Youth and Unemployment: Educational Pathways or Tracks That Lead Nowhere" (John Williamson, Angie Marsh); "Using Communication and Information Technologies To Empower Women in Rural Communities" (Margaret Grace); "Working Smarter Not Harder: Regional Disability-Based Organisations" (Harvey Griggs); "Support Networks and Trust: How Social Capital Facilitates Learning Outcomes for Small Businesses" (Sue Kilpatrick, Rowena Bell); "Groups That Learn and How They Do It" (Elizabeth Kasl); "Spiritual Impact Statements: A Key to Sustainability" (Patrick Bradbery, G. Fletcher, R. Molloy); "International Models of Community Sustainability" (Allen B. Moore, Lilian Hill, Rusty Brooks); "A Group Action Learning Model for Sustainable Rural Community Development: Reflections on an Indonesian Case" (A. Muktasam, S. Chamala); "Enabling Communities through the Arts: Case Studies from the Community Cultural Development Fund of the Australia Council" (Onko Kingma); "Community Strategies: Addressing the Challenges for Young People Living in Rural Australia" (Johanna Wyn, Helen Stokes); "A Regional Approach to Youth Employment: The Role of Young People in Renewing Regional Communities" (James

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Mulraney, Peter Turner); "What Does the Business Sector Get out of Investment in Communities?" (Marc Bowles); "Learning, Change and Sustainability: Exploring the Learning Processes of Pastoralist Stakeholders in the Tropical Savannas" (Allan Arnott, Rebecca Benson); "Learning Partnerships in the Workplace" (Jo Balatti); "Building Social Capital and Community Learning Networks in Community Internet Access Centres" (David Bruce); "Newspapers and Health Centres: Selected Short Stories of Community Development Case Studies" (Rosa MacManamey, Ian Falk, David Bruce, and Others); "Enabling Leadership: A New Community Leadership Model" (Ian Falk, Bill Mulford); and "Learning To Manage Change in Communities: A Way Forward" (Onko Kingma, Ian Falk). (Most papers contain references.) (SV)

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Learning to manage change

Developing regional communities for a local–global millennium

edited
Ian Falk

NCVER

Learning to manage change: Developing regional communities for a local–global millennium — Ian Falk (ed.)

RC 023368

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© 2001 National Centre for Vocational Education Research Ltd and University of Tasmania

ISBN 0 87397 752 1

TD/TNC 66.79

Published by

National Centre for Vocational Education Research Ltd

ABN 87 007 967 311

252 Kensington Road, Leabrook, SA 5068
PO Box 115, Kensington Park, SA 5068, Australia

Foreword

Learning to manage change: Developing regional communities for a local–global millennium is a book that illustrates the benefits of integrating different approaches to community and regional development for rural Australia. The intention is to illustrate the theoretical, practical and strategic backdrop to community and regional change. The key theme is the value of lifelong learning to community capacity building, where learning is taken as the integration of formal, non-formal and informal education and training at all levels.

The importance for rural development and sustainability in the socioeconomic context of rural decline is a contentious issue. Some argue that decline is the inevitable result of the playing out of market forces. Others, including those represented in this book, take a different view. The view is that something can—and should—be done, and that working towards a lifelong learning society is our best chance of achieving a vibrant and sustainable rural Australia. In order to achieve these goals, fundamental concerns related to re-building social trust and social capital must be addressed as a matter of urgency.

The book avoids a rhetorical exhortation to action, but instead sets out the rationale for a constructive approach to developing communities and regions using an integrated and cross-sectoral approach. From the theoretical underpinnings established early in the book, the issue of the participation of specific sectors in these processes is described. Then there is a section where practical and proven strategies, cases and examples are described from different sectors and perspectives. In all, what I hope is that the book will provide the start of a reasoned, constructive way forward for regional and community development through learning.

Learning to manage change: Developing regional communities for a local–global millennium has four parts, and 24 chapters overall. In these chapters, there is a richness of issues, background information and practical strategies related to rural communities and their development in the 21st century. The world in which rural communities are located is characterised by a nexus between a concern and valuing of local communities, and the pressure cooker forces for change and responsiveness imposed by an instantly communicating global economy.

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Preface

This book has been prepared according to standard academic book publishing procedures. The individual chapters were initially edited and screened, and were returned to the authors for amendment as required. At this stage, some chapters submitted were rejected.

After initial revisions, all chapters were sent to two independent and blind reviewers, one from the economics and social development field (Australia) and one from community and regional development (USA). Each of these reviewers commented on all chapters, their individual integrity and the overlaps and coherence of the assembled work. These comments were returned via the Editor for authorial amendment once again.

My thanks go to the independent reviewers for their time and trouble in helping shape this book into a coherent whole.

Acknowledgements

I am grateful to all those who assisted in various ways with the preparation and production of this book. Many people worked behind the scenes to coordinate the chapter contributors and the flow of paperwork associated with that process. Deborah Wagner coordinated the electronic formation of the chapters. Glenda Holloway worked hard from her rural retreat on the stages of unification of style and appearance. Susan Johns and Margaret Kreft edited the chapters to their final version guided by Bron Power. Carol Cheshire from NCVER guided the process to its fruition.

Particular thanks go to the independent reviewers from Australia and the USA, who spent many hours of time and expertise assisting the book reach its final form.

PART ONE

Local–global context

CHAPTER 1
Challenges facing rural regional Australia in new times

Ian Falk

This first chapter introduces the key issues and challenges facing Australia's rural regions. First, the underlying need to adapt to social change through learning is discussed, along with the story of a town currently facing these challenges, and what it is doing about planning for the future. International and national socioeconomic trends are then identified and discussed. Among these trends are the influence of globalisation, the decline in credibility of global markets and economic rationalism, metrocentrism and the urban drift, schooling, the revision of the nation's literacy and numeracy requirements, the nature of work in the regions, unemployment, the policy environment, the ageing nature of the population, and shifting meanings of key concepts. The chapter finishes by setting the scene for the remainder of the book.

Introduction

Regional Australia's population of some seven million people (and falling) has already told the nation that it has had enough. The rise of the One Nation party reflected the disenchantment with the nature and pace of social change, or 'rural adjustment' as it is called, being conducted by major political parties. Those parties are increasingly felt to be wielding an unrelenting economic rationalist sword. Such disenchantment is in many respects misplaced. Rural and regional areas around the world are suffering similar problems. These problems stem from the globalisation of agricultural and other markets, the resulting competitiveness for existing and shifting markets, and the loss of population from regional areas that results. As a result, there is a seemingly inevitable out-flow of economic and social infrastructure. There follows the general and familiar story of withdrawal of government and health services, shops, banks, and so on. Regional communities are portrayed as being stuck in a downward spiral of declining commodity prices, public services, commercial facilities, and political influence. Frustrated by rhetoric and policy which seems sometimes more suited to running a factory than a complex web of human beings, a number of people simply give up and walk off the land. Some stay and suffer, many others fight on.

How can people struggle against seemingly unbeatable economic odds? The whole of the national and international economic community is fixed in a scenario of change. The economic 'trends' are presented to the public as being fixed and inevitable. The markets simply must have their way. Such a landscape of relentless 'adjustment' seems levelled against any effort by individuals or their communities to stay around and fight. The message is that change is here to stay. Markets must be allowed to play out. People begin to feel as if they don't count. But change hurts.

To cope with change, people need to engage in learning processes of both a formal and informal nature. Whether we realise it or not, all of us learn throughout our lives, and our learning contributes to our community's stores of social capital. Each new situation or unknown entity we encounter is met by 'adjusting' or 'adapting' or 'finding out' about what to do about that newness. In times when we are being bombarded by more frequent and more all-encompassing newness, learning eases the burden of change, and through sound

learning processes, people come to understand the nature of the forces and influences which bring about the situation that currently affects them. Thus, the decision-making is in their own hands.

Change through learning

Over the last few decades, a large number of communities in regional areas have been successful in learning how to halt the slide in their communities' fortunes. Consolidating and even developing a community under adverse economic circumstances is not easy, and is often viewed as pointless—the last ditch effort by desperate survivors. But is it? This book claims that it is indeed possible to turn around the fortunes of communities, and provides several examples of how this turnaround has been achieved in communities and regions overseas and in Australia. People have always created economic outcomes. Within the existing economic and social frameworks, the effort of people working collectively and individually can make the difference between the survival of a township, or community, and its demise. To believe the rhetoric which suggests that we simply have to sit out the effects of economic forces is akin to the case of a corporation that admits it cannot do anything strategic to plan for and improve its future.

Given the confluence of political and social conditions in Australia at present, it is possible that the time is ripe to tackle the difficult problems associated with rural and regional consolidation and sustainability. There is a growing recognition within government circles and the public at large that solutions must be armed with both economic and social measures—one of these by itself is not sufficient. However, working across economic and social sectors requires a new way of thinking about achieving collective outcomes. Social capital has recently emerged as the 'missing ingredient' in the blend of physical and human capital already harnessed in pursuit of social and economic wellbeing. Social capital can be used to achieve the kinds of social cohesion, trust and collective cooperative behaviour that can sustain local conditions of benefit to communities in these changing times. Building social capital is a process of learning. Alongside the other main forms of capital—physical and human—social capital is now recognised as having considerable potential to act as the 'glue between the joints' of society. Or, to use another analogy, it is the oil that lubricates social activity in the creation of beneficial socioeconomic outcomes.

Drawing on both the outcomes of recent research and on a record of successful community development strategies, it is possible to suggest a positive way forward—a way which might bring the sectors together as communities of learners whose purpose is to build stores of social capital and hence the capacity of communities. In turn, these stores can be used to contribute to the greater common good. It is the task of this book to set out the rationale, the challenges and some practical exemplars of ways in which this might be achieved.

The book grew from a concern that conventional sectors of activity in our country were acting in isolated ways. Schools did not blend with their communities; TAFE Institutes provided the same courses in the country as in the city regardless of the needs of the local labour markets; health services worked in isolation from education, local government and so on; business only came into contact with other sectors if they happened to be customers, or perhaps as the donor of a prize for the school speech night.

While the primary area of activity from which the book arose was the vocational education and training sector, the book's final shape has arisen because of the nature of the times. Often called 'new times', the contemporary era is characterised by social, political, cultural and economic differentiation and fragmentation instead of standardisation and homogeneity.

These are times when to ignore external influences on a closed community is a precursor to the almost certain demise of that community. No sector can afford to cut itself off from the society around it. Working in new times means, however, a new kind of working, and one which requires constant learning as its partner: working with, not against; working across sectors not within; flexible, constant and fluid learning of required knowledge and roles on a 'just-in-time' basis; working and learning across diversity of individuals and groups not in homogenous settings.

A typical rural town?

To help fix the scene in the mind of the reader of this book, picture a small, picturesque beachside town on the eastern seaboard of Australia. The town is real, but stays anonymous for our purpose here. It is located on a large bay, with beaches and oceans nearby. The population of the town is 2100 people in winter but more than 10 000 in summer. There are two country supermarkets in town, one chemist, one medical practice (there were two until recently), a small hospital (under threat), a handful of specialty shops, two public utilities, three banks, two secondhand furniture outlets, and two pubs. The town is lucky that it retains so much business activity, as it is the centre of a much larger regional hinterland of 3000 people, whose smaller towns have seen much more severe closures and withdrawals.

The health and wellbeing of the whole community depends on the supply of funding and services of various kinds. Funding and services flow to the community through several different streams, sectors, programs and sources: education, health, medical, training, volunteer, aged care, commercial, and more importantly via three tiers of government. On investigation, it is discovered that the delivery of these streams of funding and services rarely if ever intersects. In fact, 'the local experts', those in town who know everything about everything, tell us that the right hand simply does not know what the left hand is doing. There is little or no coordination or rationalisation between the sources, and the local experts know how much money, goodwill and resources are duplicated or wasted.

The town has a history of internal social and economic difficulties. It has a very low per capita income, a high proportion of welfare recipients, and a high proportion of unemployed, especially youth unemployed. Its fishing fleet has been reduced. Its summer tourist influx has diminished. One by one, businesses closed, the community's youth had to leave in increasing numbers to access further education, and teachers dreaded more than ever being posted 'out there' to the sticks. Health services and a supermarket closed their doors, several other small businesses closed, and government services stopped or shrank. More people in families took on paid work, for less hourly pay. There was less time for talk, less time for kids, less time to help out in the community. The pool of volunteers decreased. Community groups ceased or became skeletal. The older male public community leaders tried for a decade or more to repair the damage, to no effect. Old strategies no longer worked. Nothing that had once worked seemed to work any more.

Recently, two events in the community signalled a change. The first event was a bitter division over a development. 'Jobs will be created in this industry', said some. 'Jobs will be lost through defacing the environment', said others. The community, divided though it was, formed into interest groups who, for two years now, have worked rallying support and meeting frequently to fight for their case. Of course, the central focus of each faction was on the future good of the town. External resources were drawn on by both sides: new information had to be gathered, politicians lobbied, experts consulted, and research found, commissioned and used for each faction's case. People were volunteering for roles they had never seen themselves carrying out before. Community interaction was at an all-time high.

The community's capacity had been developed. In the course of several months, the situation was resolved (unsatisfactorily to one faction, of course) by the State government, but the tension in the town remains.

Not long after, there was a whole-community project to raise money for a kids' skate park. The target was reached in a few short months, as the community interactivity was at an all-time high. Local youth now use the skate park, and the word has spread—youth from outside the community come in to use it as well. Since this apparently small success, the local government has initiated a community-based strategic planning process which, it claims, must be driven and owned by the community. A townscape has been commissioned and tabled, an industry audit completed, and on the basis of the information from these, various government grants applied for. There is a new air of optimism starting to be heard in the streets and shops.

From this case, it is possible to see evidence of the social and economic outcomes of people learning through their interactions across the different sections of the community, in pursuit of varying common purposes. Their capacity to act has been developed and broadened. Their knowledge and sources of knowledge have expanded and been applied to different yet purposeful tasks and activities. Their personal and collective identities have altered so as to be able to act in different ways and to facilitate action and permit future action. Their talk about their work and leisure activities, and learning about each other's funding and programs, produces not only more cost-effective solutions to social and economic problems, but provides the social infrastructure for further learning and implementation of local solutions to those problems. In many respects, this community is showing the signs of becoming a learning community.

Societies and regions are made up of communities like the one described, and they have the potential to learn new ways of becoming sustainable. Yet social and economic well-being do not occur in a vacuum. It is the result of social processes. Achieving sustainable social and economic outcomes for communities across Australia is only possible by dealing with the social processes of the community as a whole, not simply with its parts in isolation.

The challenges

In order to manage change in the complex environment of a living, dynamic community, it is first of all essential to understand those dynamics. Why are they the way they are? What is the relationship between the local behaviour and the broader national and international socioeconomic scenario? Under conditions of rapid change to social and economic circumstances, there are particular social and economic trends which can be identified. All are evident in communities and regions. All affect each other, and the potential—the capacity—of the community to constructively manage its development. This section now describes the nine main socioeconomic trends and challenges as I see them.

1. ***Globalisation, declining credibility of markets and economic rationalism***
   The fixed and all-pervading influence on regional and community development is the instant nature of global communication and the instant availability of knowledge and information through electronic means, especially the Internet. This has altered forever the nature and operation of the economic scenario, the financial sector and the way we talk about 'difference' and 'diversity' of groups, cultures and ethnicity. However, there has been, partly as a result, the start of an apparent decline in the credibility of global markets—a recognition that they are failing to support economic predictions. There is the related failure of the 'export or bust' scenario to cure economic woes, and a mixed

outcome for the so-called 'Asian crisis' which seems to have had nothing but a good effect on Australia. The decline in public support or credibility of economic rationalism, along with the perception of political processes as being somewhat elitist and sophist, has seen the desperation of sections of both the rural and urban communities. This desperation has resulted in a large number of people opting for apparently shallow, ideologically myopic, single-purpose and fringe political parties typical of 'closed community' thinking. Closed communities typically ignore externalities.

The challenge for regions and communities is to balance the need for external information and influences with the need for a sense of 'place'—the need for individual and group identity in a community-of-common-purpose. Yes, we are all members of various real and virtual communities, but it would be a fatal mistake to discard people's expressed grief over the 'loss of community' as being simply emotional nonsense. Place and identity count, and must be accounted for in the process of responding to change. Chapter 13 describes how this challenge is met in different countries.

2. Metrocentrism and urban drift

The balance between an agrarian society and an urban one has been tilted in favour of an all-pervading metrocentric one, tinged with more than a little old fashioned classism. Decision-making, leadership styles, economic and social policy, education and training provision, health and business, are informed by an insidious and pervasive view of the city-as-centre. The nature of our geography has imposed a pattern of social, cultural and economic activity that places high levels of dependence on a relationship of mutual dependence between 'the bush' and 'the city'. Caught in the decline of government, health, education, training and commercial services caused by so-called 'thin markets', youth must leave the country in increasing numbers, volunteer numbers are reduced, and rural poverty remains an unrecognised and un-talked about phenomenon.

Paradoxically, rural problems are not contained to rural areas. Corresponding problems are caused in urban areas, cities, suburbs and larger centres in relation to housing, health, transport, schooling, and social concerns such as drugs, alcohol and homelessness.

The challenge inherent in this social trend is to construct local identities of people and places which stand in their own right, and do not only depend on the stereotypical 'rural/urban' binary for their existence. Chapter 22 contains a number of examples of how this challenge has been met, including the example of the 'Believe It!' campaign which is a good case in point.

3. Schooling

Once the place of unfettered and non-politicised general education, schools have become sites of contest between governments, teachers, parents and students. The same sets of statistics are used by the opposing forces to support contradictory positions, as instanced by the literacy debate with the national literacy test results and the government's use of them. As Norton Grubb says in Chapter 6 of this book, 'schools are often used to enhance economic development (which) is usually counterproductive'. However, the battle about general versus vocational education is now located firmly in schools. The effects of the institution of schooling on rural areas are mainly caused by the centralised nature of the system, where staffing, curriculum and resources are managed more or less from the 'Head Office'. Even when resources are 'managed' out of regional offices, these offices usually reflect a high level of centralist policy and

practices, with some encouraging recent exceptions. Simplified and over-characterised, schooling tends to:

- be for the 'mainstream' (that is, *non*-rural);
- emphasise 'basic skills', namely those particular basic skills more appropriate to an urban and large-industry set of values and outcomes rather than the diverse and complex mixed-skill occupations of rural areas;
- be centralised not regionalised;
- be less integrated with community in respect to staff, curriculum and resources, and
- be resourced for those students who are 'good with their heads' rather than those who are 'good with their hands', thus valuing non-vocational education and training outcomes as opposed to vocational.

4. Revision of the nation's literacy and numeracy needs

There is no question about the fact that the nation's literacy and numeracy needs have changed. The problem is that 'literacy levels' have been measured by tests which measure some aspects of literacy and numeracy, such as technical skills, but not those aspects of literacy and numeracy which are so crucial to work, leisure and civic life in new times, such as how to find and gather knowledge, how to work with diverse peoples, how to make judgements about what is important knowledge for particular and changing situations, how to solve problems, and how to become competent at 'civic literacy'. Politicians, constrained by the power of the tests, know the requirements for literacies and numeracies has expanded. They have no option but to move the goal posts—the rules by which judgements about literacy are made. Higher 'benchmarks' are selected, on the basis that these skills are now the ones required for a functional working and civic life. Unfortunately, the tests themselves actually prove that the skills they measure have *not* been depleted over the last decade or so. Teachers and schools have in fact raised the levels of those 'basic skills'. Nevertheless, governments and much of the public still blame schools for a perceived failure, and for the welfare recipients who are not able to acquire the revised and required literacies and numeracies.

The challenge here is for schools to work closely with their regions and communities to help achieve common goals. Chapters 17 and 18 provide some excellent examples of how this can be achieved.

5. Nature of work

Most of us now recognise how the nature of existing work is changing qualitatively and quantitatively. First, the nature of the available work is changing in broad terms from manual to knowledge work. Second, the availability of work itself is on the decline. Jobs are simply less available, a condition apparently more prevalent in rural areas. What we have not come to grips with as a society is the consequence of permanently changed 'work'. By continuing with the charade that we can achieve something close to full—high at least—employment, we are creating a growing underclass of people who will never be in paid employment. Politicians will essentially promote policies which they expect will gain the public's vote, including reactionary stances, notably, a reproduction of the desirability of 'paid work'. While elections and policies are fought on the battleground of 'paid work', we can never come to grips with the reintegration of the adult population who self-identify as worthless in relation to work. Mike Steketee, (2000) summarises a number of sources on poverty and unemployment. He notes that some areas have an entrenched culture of unemployment explainable in the context that

they are now into their fourth generation where no member of their family has been employed.

To meet this challenge, what is required is a visionary shift in the nature of 'what counts as work', where contributions to community of many kinds are equally as valued and rewarded as 'paid work' is now. Chapter 5 and Chapter 23 on leadership, help us understand how to work towards such a new vision.

6. Unemployment

Unemployment is a discreet and important category of 'nature of work' (above). It is forecast that, far from governments being able to significantly reduce unemployment, it will actually increase (Rifkin 1999). For rural communities, the trend is to lose youth to the cities as they seek opportunities related to employment, education and training, and leisure. As a result, in rural communities the unemployed are likely to be more visible, whether young or old.

The challenge is not how do we create more jobs, so much as how do we restructure our thinking and communities so that there is not such a stigma attached to being unemployed. The nature of 'work' has to change so that productive work but not necessarily 'paid work' in the traditional sense, is seen to be valued by our society. It must be valued so that the current unemployed 'underclass' are reintegrated into and involved with their community's goals. Chapter 7 helps us understand the effects of this social deception on our youth.

7. Policy/program environment

Governments at all levels recognise that they have to respond to an ambivalent set of conditions and electors. Electors want to see the problems addressed quickly, so political change happens more quickly than ever before. Politicians, aware that the electorate is weary of change, often rely on a reactionary or traditional platform to carry the day. As well, the social trend to chop and change the policy environment in response to changing circumstances seems to have quite deleterious effects in its own right. For example, changes to conditions of training and learning provision for the unemployed have resulted in the recipients being denied access to the very same lifelong learning which is the subject of the policy rhetoric.

Similarly, there are contradictory policy messages indicated by, for example, media reports. On the one hand, there is talk of devolving power to the community level. This fits with the need to devolve costs through promoting community participation in establishing local solutions to local problems. However, there does not seem to be a parallel devolution of resources to support these moves. The net effect, as perceived at the community level, is still one of 'top down' rather than 'community driven'. Chapters 2, 3 and 4 explain the need for a new rationale to redress the narrow focus of the past.

The challenge in this scenario is to use the best of the story and avoid the pitfalls. The best is the community working together to achieve its own ends—becoming empowered if you like. The pitfall is not to lose access to sources of funds to help in these processes, nor to allow political leaders to use community processes as a reason to reduce resources.

8. Ageing population

As the baby boomers work their way through the population (a huge question in itself) the challenges related to this growing group include questions of health infrastructure, the appropriate use of enforced or voluntary additional time and leisure opportunities, the rise in impact of grey lobby groups, and paradoxically, the effects on youth of decreased resources resulting from the need to resource 'grey power'. The need to incorporate the skills and expertise of the ageing population towards community ends, while balancing the need to involve youth fully in these activities, will remain a local preoccupation.

9. Revised meanings of words such as community, environment, rurality, family, gender, leadership and work

Social institutions such as family, marriage and gender have changed. Through technological and scientific discoveries, our perceptions of many other concepts have also changed, such as the 'environment'. Changes to our understandings of these concepts is fundamental to this discussion. These changed perceptions result in contention around these words, which become issues in themselves, and then challenges. For example, words such as 'environment' were not contentious once. Now they are. Confusion results from differing perceptions of these terms. Consensus about meanings often must be achieved before rational discussion or planning can occur.

Challenges stemming from changing meanings include impacts on responsiveness to change. People react to fast change by returning to the security of closed communities.

Finally, the nature and role of leadership has shifted from a quite general perception of civic leadership as being the 'mover and shaker' to one of the need for a multiple view of leadership which sees different roles for different leaders in different situations, with skills in working across groups and sectors, not simply within one. This point is made by a number of chapter contributors in this book.

The significance of social capital

It is worthy of note that of the forms of capital referred to in this paper—physical (economic), human and social—social capital is the least researched of all. In other words, it has a recognised role in actually enhancing and producing socioeconomic outcomes, yet it is not measured by traditional economic or social measures. Many of the chapter contributors in this book explain their views on how social capital can be built and used towards the wellbeing of communities and regions, including Bawden, Geno and Perkins. Many others explain how their ideas contribute to the conditions which make social capital production possible, such as Courvisanos. Specific sectoral views, by those such as Grubb, Grace, Kilpatrick and Bell, Bradbery, and Fletcher and Molloy, illustrate the significance of those sectors in presenting other challenges or issues that must be planned into change processes.

In Part Three of the book, the success stories set out a variety of cases where some successful action was taken that resulted in community or regional improvement. Each of these instances, large or small, contributes in some way towards making explicit the complexities and dynamics of working with and across whole communities.

Implications for regional sustainability

All the success stories in Part Three of this volume contain the following threads or themes that are common to successful instances of community and regional development activities and projects:

- Locally developed solutions are essential for successful projects, including the study of what incentives or rewards actually work with different potential users. Potential users include volunteer groups.
- There are explicit forms of encouraging community processes, networks and opportunities to get together through planned events and networks.
- All aspects and dimensions of each community are integrated through purposeful activities.
- The full depth of each community's historical knowledge is available to the participants in the process.

The processes implemented integrate external and internal community processes, taking account of the external environment while celebrating local place, history and identity.

Summary

Achieving sustainable and desirable socioeconomic conditions for Australia's rural regions in new times requires constant learning and working across sectors and groups. It requires a consideration of people as having a need for their 'place', not just linked through virtual networks. Our understanding of the nature of learning has changed. Not so many years ago, learning was seen as the fixed and formally acquired knowledge, skills and attitudes gained at school, TAFE or university. More recently, there has arisen a legitimate field of study related to learning in workplaces, learning organisations and even learning societies. Increasingly, learning is 'lifelong', occurs constantly, and is a resource in adjusting to change. As communities and regions learn how to adjust to change, they too will need to explicitly and collectively recognise that learning is their most valuable and integral resource, and plan accordingly.

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CHAPTER 2
Regional economic decay and regeneration under structural change

Jerry Courvisanos

Declining economic conditions in regional Australia sets up the central dimension of the crisis of rural and regional communities. The chapter aims to first examine the economic circumstances of these communities in a period of rapid structural change and then to identify a path for sustainable economic regeneration. The first half of the chapter outlines the economic forces that have led to regional economic decay and the mainstream economic policy analysis that reinforces regional decay. The second half looks at prospects for economic regeneration of regional communities in line with the new emerging global economy. Crucial in making any such regeneration sustainable is a coherent policy perspective that enables all economic agents to participate in this emerging economic trajectory. The policy principle is one of understanding innovation-based evolutionary systems, while appreciating the role of strategic planning and intervention for sustainable regional economic development. All economic agents in regional communities need to participate in this planning and intervention, including governments at all levels, small business, large globalised corporations, regional community groups, trade unions, volunteer organisations, significant public sector organisations including schools, and professional/academic contributors. How all (or some) of these agents can come together to re-establish some economic base in different parts of regional Australia is the ultimate objective.

Structural change in regional Australia

Evolution has finally caught up with the dinosaur that is the economy of regional Australia. In biological metaphor terms, there are only two economic paths available into the next century: economic decay or regeneration. There is no option that allows any part of non-urban Australia to remain essentially as it has been in the past. This is the economic dimension of the regional Australian crisis. Folk in non-urban Australia inherently identify with their past and its traditions more closely than their urban cousins, yet holding on to these traditions in economic terms results in depression and decay. The alternative is to harness the urban-based 'new economy' into the regional economic structure, which means changes that entail risk and uncertainty of the type rarely experienced by regional folk.

This chapter outlines the economic structural changes that have engulfed regional Australia and two economic approaches to understanding these changes, with their divergent public policy implications. Economic rationalism is the term used to describe the current 'rule of the market' approach that dominates decisions related to public policies that affect regional Australia. Evolutionary innovation is the term used to describe the alternative economic approach with a public policy perspective that is process-oriented, aimed at fostering conditions conducive to innovation and regeneration. Two terms need clearly to be defined within a strict economic context at the outset: regional Australia and structural change. Regional Australia specifically refers to non-urban parts of Australia that have three distinctive elements of economic decay compared to urban Australia: relatively higher unemployment, declining rather than increasing populations, and consistently greater withdrawal of community services (both public and private) with relatively few alternatives

to service access. These elements apply to areas *outside* the mainland Australian capital cities and the other major significant urban centres (Gold Coast, Sunshine Coast, Townsville, Rockhampton, Wollongong, Newcastle, and Geelong).[1] In the analysis below, the whole of Tasmania is identified as part of regional Australia.[2]

Structural change refers to the transition in an economy from a traditional economy based on an old technology towards a powerful new technological paradigm with a new industrial base (the new economy). This technology shift carries with it the impetus for a recovery out of recession and concurrently alters the trend path of growth significantly upwards.[3] Technological change is seen as the principal means by which capitalists search for a greater source of wealth.[4] However, it is the disrupting effect of major technological breakthroughs that alter the path of economic cycles and growth. Major innovations are introduced in a process called 'creative destruction', when new technology *destroys* the old technology by making the latter obsolete and *creating* a robust economy based on a new set of capital stock.[5] Australia is currently going through such a structural change from the manufacturing-based economy to the information-based digital economy, and regional Australia is experiencing great difficulties in adjusting to this new economy.

Regional economic decay

The mass production manufacturing sector, together with the primary commodities that provide input to the sector were the basis for economic growth in capitalist economies from the 1930s (Freeman, Clarke & Soete 1982). The Federal government developed hydroelectric energy infrastructure to power this type of economy through the Snowy Mountain Scheme (SMS). The emphasis was on commodity exports (wool, wheat, beef, forest products, minerals) and import-substitution manufacturing (textiles, motor vehicles, heavy engineering). Federal governments throughout this period assisted with subsidies (for commodities) and tariff protection (for manufacturing). Much of this economic development had a regional Australia focus. In this sense, the periphery was tied to the centre. Commodity exports were based outside urban areas; regional manufacturing centres were protected in steel, textiles, cars; and public infrastructure needed to support these developments (SMS, Hydro Electric Commission (HEC) in Tasmania, roads, communications).[6]

[1] Some of these urban centres may also suffer from the same elements of economic decay as regional Australia, but not all three and not to the same degree.

[2] Tasmania is denoted as part of regional Australia since it suffers from all three elements of decay in a severe form. Supporting this perspective are two observations. Hobart is the only capital city to register a rise in unemployment over the period March 1996 to August 1998—up by 0.9% to 10.3% (Wahlquist 1998). Tasmania as a whole qualifies for funding under the *Regional* Telecommunications Infrastructure Fund (RTIF), indicating the regional status of the State.

[3] See Chapters 4 and 5 in Courvisanos (1996) for a detailed account of how troughs in business cycles (or recessions) are the basis for the introduction of new technology that stimulates the economy out of recession. This also provides highly productive new capital stock, enabling the development of strong long-term economic growth.

[4] Karl Marx called this source of wealth 'surplus value'. New forms of surplus value are needed to counter the tendency for business profit rates to fall as capital stock replaces labour.

[5] J.A. Schumpeter developed the concept of 'creative destruction', see Schumpeter (1934).

[6] For details on the political economy of Australia over this period, see Catley & McFarlane (1981); Crough & Wheelwright (1982). For an example of development in the periphery, see Wilde (1981).

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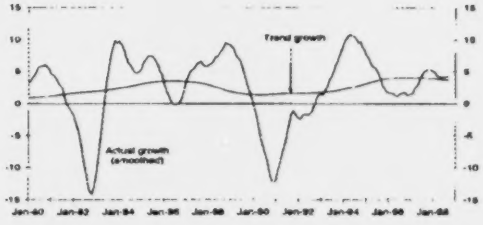
This structure can no longer deliver economic growth to regional economies. Freeman and Perez (1988, pp. 47–58) identify this mass production 'techno-economic paradigm' as being eclipsed by a new micro-electronic information technology paradigm and the related service-oriented 'new age' economy. In major urban-industrial centres, the structural changes involved are disguised by the mass of economic activity flowing through them. Regional economies lack the diversity of economic activity to cushion structural change. This new economy does not depend in any way on the attributes existing in the periphery. In this sense, the centre is disconnected from the periphery, and more connected to other global centres.[7]

Taking the example of the State of Tasmania as a regional economy enables a comparison to be made of recent business cycle statistics between Australia and Tasmania. This comparison reveals a growing gap between the centre and the periphery.[8] Figure 1 shows a coincident index business cycle for Australia.[9] Annual growth rates rose strongly after a prolonged 1991–92 classical recession (or depression). This was followed by a mid-1990s 'growth recession' due to uncertainties from the 1996 election and inability of the new government to initially establish business confidence. In early 1997 there was a minor expansion with a levelling-off through 1998 to stay just above the trend rate.[10]

Figure 1: Australian Coincident Index (trend and actual growth rates, per cent annualised)



Source: Mercer-Melbourne Institute (1998, p. 11).

Figure 2, in comparison, shows the same index series for Tasmania. There is a much more uncertain and volatile expansion out of the 1991–92 recession (notice the 'dip' in 1994), and then a collapse into negative growth rates with no effective expansion in 1996 and 1997. A minor one quarter early 1998 growth peak has been followed by a collapse back to growth rates *below* the trend line. The trend line also shows a slight downward trend compared to the steady rising trend of the national trend growth line. Lack of any effective cycle expansion and relative weak growth, both evident in Tasmania, are typically the type of regional economic decay being experienced in regional Australia generally.

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[7] See Stilwell (1992, pp. 92–102) on the centre-periphery economic relations model.

[8] Kilpatrick & Felmingham (1996) provide evidence of this growing centre-periphery gap in terms of employment turnover becoming substantially lower in States with weaker economic activity like Tasmania and South Australia.

[9] A **coincident** index portrays the **current** level of activity, while leading and lagged indices relate to statistical measures that portray future and past levels of activity, respectively.

[10] The year-to-September 1998 growth rate in GDP of 4.2 per cent (or 0.6 percentage points above the trend rate of 3.6 per cent), is strong by world standards, and certainly much stronger growth rates than in the troubled Asian region (Mercer-Melbourne Institute 1998, p. 1).

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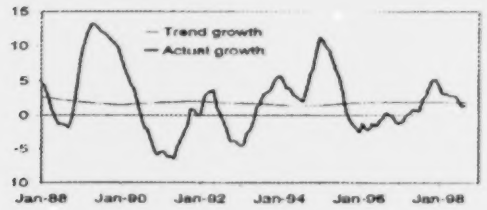
Figure 2: Tasmanian Coincident Index (trend and actual growth rates, per cent annualised)



Source: Mercer-Melbourne Institute (1998, p. 29).

Dimensions of the regional economic decay stemming from structural changes outlined above can be listed as long-term falling commodity prices, removal of protection, introduction of deregulation and competition policies, changes in western retail demand, and rise of cheaper sources of production in developing countries. All these factors have accompanied the collapse of traditional sectors of the Australian economy (see Bell 1997).

The national economy in its early 1990s recovery reflected the shift away from the traditional economy with strong investment of fixed capital stock in the new age economy. It is for this reason that the 1997 strong national growth recovery has *not* been able to pull up the regional areas along with urban growth. As growth is increasingly dependent on the information technology paradigm, regional economies like Tasmania which maintain the traditional economy are unable to take advantage of national growth impetus. Evidence of this in Tasmania is the uncertain and eventual aborted attempt to expand out of the 1991–92 recession (see in Figure 2 above).

With the levelling-off of national economic activity through 1998, there is no strong effective demand pushing the level of national economic activity. This *amplifies* any structural regional dilemma. The Asian crisis reinforces the traditional sectors' decline, with the most exposed export industries to the Asian economies being those that are regional commodity-based (e.g. steel, wool, wood products).

Economic rationalism

Mainstream economic analysis is neoclassical economic theory. Issues are defined in terms of market equilibrium, where price signals through supply and demand by individual players in the market result in the optimum allocation of resources. Players are motivated to achieve this optimum because they are all seeking to maximise their own satisfaction (in terms of profits or consumer demand). For a long time, market failure has been identified as distortion of the equilibrium conditions so that the optimum cannot be achieved.[11]

In the early post-World War 2 period, governments in capitalist economies saw the need to intervene when market distortions occurred, in order to offset these distortions. The offsets would tend to move the economy back towards the optimum equilibrium position. Regional economies benefited from this approach since it is in the periphery that distortions tend to be greatest.

[11] See Bryant and Wells (1998, pp. 99–102) for a simple outline of neoclassical economics and related market failures. For a more technically rigorous discussion, see Bennett (1992, pp. 3–10, 62–71).

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The mid-1970s saw the rise of neo-liberalism with a rejection of governmental offsets. From various sections of conservative economics (e.g. Chicago, Virginia, Austrian Schools) arose a general view on the role of the state. That role is to provide and maintain appropriate rules within which markets can be relied on to emerge and develop in ways that will ensure a *movement* towards the optimum equilibrium position, rather than have the state dictate that *movement*. In Australia this position became powerful through the 1980s and has come to be known commonly as 'economic rationalism', because it reasserts the optimising motivation of rational economic individual players in the market place.[12]

Neo-liberalism has intensified the urban market-based movement of structural change and exacerbated regional economic decay. No attempt is made to plan any coherent response by the state to the decay of regional Australia. This is evident by the demise of regional economic development ministries within Federal and State governments. There is no overall perspective on regional economies, with elements of these economies spread over many ministries. Any regional state responses that have emerged, like maintenance of a particular tariff (e.g. textiles) or establishment of a regional fund (e.g. Regional Telecommunication Infrastructure Fund, RTIF[13]), are purely *ad hoc* and relate more to political lobbying pressures than any responsible economic plan. So, despite the ascendancy of neo-liberalism as a broad economic perspective, specific cases of 'economic irrationalism' have occurred. Such cases may provide some amelioration of the regional decay process (tariff remains) or some support for regeneration (RTIF), but no long-term strategic plan for systemic coordination exists. A new economic paradigm is needed to provide such overall coordination in the face of a new major technological paradigm.

Regional economic regeneration

There is a new age economy that has been identified in the global capitalist system. It is based on the information technology paradigm, and involves services aligned to information, finance and domestic help (Ruthven 1998). Included in this economy is reinvention of niche outsourcing markets and unique intellectual property rights. All these sectors are becoming globalised with lean management structures and ecologically sustainable practices. Incorporation of advanced computer-generated information and data processing in the technological set up of these businesses is the distinguishing element of the new age economy.

The evidence on the strength of this economy is limited and anecdotal. Statistical collection of such sectors is poor, reflecting the traditional economy bias in collation. Freeman and Perez (1988) have identified the 1980s and 1990s as the upswing in the long-term development of this economy on a global basis. Goldsworthy (1997) has identified the information technology (IT) industry as key to global capitalism of the 21st century, with the Australian IT industry worth $67 billion in 1995,[14] employing over 500 000 people and making up 7.5 per cent of the total economy. Australia has two per cent of IT global users and only 0.3 per cent of IT global producers, creating a severe IT trade deficit for this country.

[12] Recently a large number of books have been published which provide critiques of 'economic rationalism'. Amongst them are Pusey (1991) from a sociological perspective, Rees, Rodley and Stilwell (1993) from a political economy perspective, and Quiggin (1996) from an economic theory perspective.

[13] RTIF was set up by the Senate to provide funds for regions to have information technology infrastructure projects developed in response to the Howard Government's 1997 part sale of Telstra.

[14] Compare this to some manufacturing industries in the same year: $10b. In textile, clothing, footwear and leather: $43b. (Goldsworthy 1998).

Regional Australia has contributed generally little to this new economy. It is still heavily based on the traditional economy, as the Tasmanian cycle data indicates (see Figure 2 *cf.* Figure 1). A recent population report (KPMG 1998) shows that ten of the top dozen regional areas that have shown population growth are located in Australia's warm coastal areas and have strong service-based economies based around tourism and IT support.[15] They are experiencing regional economic regeneration, based on the new economy. The dozen regional areas that are losing the largest populations are all based on traditional industrial, commodity or mining components. No amount of reinvestment by traditional-based firms can ensure long-term viability of commodity and industrial activities in regional Australia. Cheap labour and resources in third world countries, together with poor demand (exemplified by weak world prices), have ensured that traditional sector reinvestment by firms in developed capitalist economies cannot be justified in any rate of return measure.

Neo-liberalism would dictate that the state should not interfere with the market forces that have produced this new economy. Following this dictum, the current trend in regional Australia will exacerbate. This is where a few warm coastal regional areas will regenerate and grow, but the vast majority of regional Australia will continue to suffer economic decay.

Rejection of neo-liberalism is not enough, if it means the continuation of neoclassical mainstream economic analysis in explaining economic development and devising economic policy implications. Optimum market equilibrium cannot explain the major determinants of decay and regeneration (Bryant & Wells 1998, pp. 99–102). It is an equilibrium supply-demand model at a point in time (static) with technological change identified as an exogenous variable disrupting the equilibrium solution with no guidance to its outcome. Any policy guidelines that come from such an economic model will only result in government intervention that tries to adjust for the exogenous effect of technological change in a way that sustains (or resuscitates) the *status quo*. Reinstatement of subsidies, protection, tax breaks and public services in regional Australia, in order to account for market failure will only temporarily relieve the crisis without addressing the need for regeneration. Market failure is no longer the most appropriate economic justification for state intervention. A new economic paradigm to guide government policy is required.

Evolutionary innovation systems

'The past decade has witnessed the rapid development of a radically new school of economic thought, and one that may ultimately prove very influential in policy considerations' (Bryant & Wells 1998, p. 1). The essence of this approach is the role of innovation in enterprise behaviour that brings about technological and organisational developments, and also drives structural change. Bryant and Wells (1998, p. 53) have called this approach 'evolutionary innovation systems' because it is based on three elements:

1. *A dynamic (non-static) economic model* which assigns evolutionary change of firms from infant, growth to maturity (and then decay or regeneration) as the central competitive process in the market, and where static price signals are subsumed within this broader process.

[15] This top dozen includes both the Sunshine and Gold Coasts, which were excluded from our definition of regional Australia.

2. *Empirical studies of the processes of technological change and innovation* as the basic inductive 'real world' focus of behavioural investigation of organisations, with an appreciation of the factors that account for development and diffusion of technology through the economy.

3. A *systems approach to interaction and knowledge* based on historical and institutional economic circumstances that lead to behavioural motivation by players in the market that recognises bounded rationality (non-optimal) and cumulative acquisition of knowledge.
This approach is built around two basic assumptions on the operation of organisations in the economy:

- potential capabilities of the organisation ('slack' or spare managerial capacity)—the organisation's historically-determined resource base; and
- organisational routines (or conventions) that determine how the constraints from the potential are handled—the organisation's culturally-based decision structure.

The dynamic competitive process is created by coordinated cumulative learned routines in production, distribution, marketing and improving product and processes (innovation). The more flexible the routines are in business, the more able they are to evolve and change the market environment to achieve some competitive advantage. This requires corporate strategic planning, innovation and also ability to know when to change routines.

A systems approach to economics handles dynamic competitive processes, based on satisfying (rather than optimising) behaviour with decision rules of thumb that form the basic business environment (mark-up pricing, rate of desired excess capacity). This environment establishes some stability in an uncertain world (context-based rules). Systems work only within *tolerable* limits, assessing conduct on the basis of staying within these limits so rules remain unaltered. Feedback loops of 'learning by doing' provide the flexibility for rules (and pricing behaviour) to change.[16]

Policy implications from this approach recognise that market imperfections (or failure) are the keys to the generation of innovation and technological change, not the reason to abolish or ameliorate such imperfections. Policy action must ensure a variety of activities and not specialise in neoclassical 'comparative advantage', while encouraging innovation and 'learning by doing', even if it means mistakes are made. Policy should focus on processes that improve systems rather than be neoclassical outcome-oriented. Finally, policy should encourage positive expectations by building social consensus and disseminating new technologies (reduce time taken for diffusion paths).[17] This policy perspective essentially aims to develop a strong social capital (or community infrastructure) base for the regeneration of an economy from traditional to the innovation-based new economy. Many other chapters in this book examine various specific strategies to developing such social capital.

Implications for regional sustainability

Economic implications for regional sustainability stem from the evolutionary-innovation policy dictum. The focus must be on how to create an environment in regional Australia that will induce strong innovation-based, service-oriented activities. Regional policy needs to recognise that innovations introduced at the recession phase of the business cycle allow for a

[16] See Bryant and Wells (1998) for a non-technical detailed synthesis of this new school of economic thought and its historical roots.
[17] This list of policy implications is adapted from Bryantand Wells (1998, p. 92).

strong upward thrust into recovery (short-term) while regenerating (long-term) growth.[18] This needs government strategy to build a sustainable, innovation-based economy.

Two pillars to this recovery strategy are (1) attraction of 'leading edge' large IT-based global-oriented organisations (public and private) to establish initial multiplier effects and know-how, then (2) creating opportunities and basic infrastructure for local-based organisations to link into the information economy. The second pillar needs a 'critical mass' take-off using the state as 'anchor client', IT access centres, community networking to develop cooperative and integrated links both in business and in the general community, electronic commerce centre, and incubation sites for local firms to develop IT-based skills. In particular, local regional firms need support to enter global markets and develop global corporate plans through the IT paradigm. Funding to support such strategies (e.g. RTIF) is only worthwhile if it is part of a strategic regional plan that involves all levels of government in a coherent integrated approach for regeneration of traditional regional areas.

The regional plan should recognise sub-regions within the region, identifying specific aspects of social capital that can be developed with strong innovation and 'learning by doing' processes. Each sub-region needs to examine its capabilities and cultural-based institutions with a view to encouraging reinvention and learning around them. An example is of a wine-based sub-region shifting from basic commodity sales to a tourism (wine tours, live concerts in vineyards) and hospitality (regionally known labels sponsored in tourist resorts) focus using IT-based physical, human and social capital resources. By focusing on the strengths of past traditions, sub-regions can plan with state support to redevelop them in a long-term strategic process that integrates with the broader region so as to fit into the new economy.

Conclusion: Focus on challenges and strategy

This chapter has sought to demonstrate two principles and their relation to regional sustainability in Australia. *First* is the notion of a dynamic evolutionary economy that is innovation-based, and the need for regional Australia to accept the challenge to regenerate along this new economic trajectory. *Second* is the policy principle of strategic state intervention based on a new systems-based economic school of thought, to manage the shift to the new trajectory path in regional Australia.

The first principle is non-conditional. It is occurring as you read this, with only a minority of regional centres able to take advantage of the new economy, since it is highly centralised and global in nature. The second principle is highly conditional on the ability of governments, along with regional communities and businesses, to recognise how strategic planning and cooperation is required for regional Australia to participate more directly and long-term in this new economy.

Regional Australia has many development groups who are gaining various levels of state support to regenerate by diversifying and value adding. South Australia's Riverland is one example, where agriculture is becoming highly diversified and linked to service-based needs around wine, olives and almonds (Wahlquist 1998). Another is the Tasmanian Rundle Government's *Directions Statement* and its collaboration with two giant telecommunications giants (Telstra and Nortel) to bring IT into a leading regional position (Courvisanos 1998). In both cases there is a need for 'established' industries to reinvent themselves in a way that can take advantage of the new techno-economic trajectory (e.g. trees and eco-tourism, wine

[18] See Courvisanos (1996). On the link between business cycles and innovation, see in particular Chapters 3 and 4. For historical case studies on this approach, see Chapter 7.

and entertainment). Also, there is a need to diversify in a way that allows IT to feed into other industries that are related to regional advantages in an environmentally sustainable manner (e.g. ecotourism, wind power generation, sustainable forest cultivation, aquaculture, alkaloids).

Of course, there will be failures and backsliding. Business cycles are always with us. The focus must, however, remain positive from business, community and government. Traditional industries will continue to provide basic regional economic activity for a while longer, but its proportion will continue to decline. Regeneration is needed to provide a trajectory shift into a stronger regional economy for the future.

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CHAPTER 3
Life beyond economics: Learning systems and social capital

Richard Bawden

There is a growing recognition in communities across the globe, which a fundamental rebellion is brewing. This challenge to convention reflects two fundamental tenets: (a) that the essential activity of being human is not the setting and seeking of goals of resource allocation, but the establishment and maintenance of relationships; and (b) that learning about our world involves experience, spiritual insights, values, emotions, and disposition, as well as 'pure' reason. Relationship building, it is argued, is the essence of social capital, while learning is its currency. Evidence is provided in support of the contention that we are fast moving 'beyond economics' as an expression of total human endeavour, and this is related to the notions of a risk society and what is referred to as reflexive modernity. The challenges of the globalisation of risk, and thus the risks of globalisation, are explored from a perspective of 'appreciative systems', and this notion is itself investigated through the perspective of learning systems.

Introduction

> I find it surprising that we have no accepted word to describe the activity of attaching meaning to communication or the code by which we do so, a code which is constantly confirmed, developed or changed by use. I have for many years referred to this mental activity as 'appreciation'; and to the code which it uses, as its 'appreciative system'; and to the state of that code at any time as its 'appreciative setting'. I call it a system because, although tolerant of ambiguity and even inconsistency, it is sensitive to them and tries to reconcile them' (Vickers 1983, p. 43).

It is not a trivial endeavour to take on an intellectual movement with such an awe-inspiring aura, tradition, and title as The Enlightenment; particularly given that its foundations were established during the 17th century with the birth of the philosophy of rationalism, and its association with the later emergence in the 18th century, of science and the technologies of modernity.

Yet such a challenge is afoot, with individuals and communities alike, in pockets the world over, beginning to rebel against a logic and rationality from which, as Ulrich (1993) has it, 'moral judgement has been eliminated'. In the face of the complexity of a problematic which includes social, cultural, and ecological risks on a global scale, the ethics of human actions are assuming increasing importance. Under such circumstances concerns lie both with the contributions of the unforeseen consequences of scientific application, as well as with the inadequacy of scientific rationality to deal with such impacts.

The primary arguments that I want to present here, fuel this rebellion, which is taking as its two fundamental tenets that, contrary to prevailing perspectives: (a) the essential activity of being human is the appreciative establishment and maintenance of ethically defensible relationships, rather than the mere setting and seeking of goals of resource allocation; and (b) experience, spiritual insight, values, emotions, and disposition, are all

as essential to this human activity, as is reason; the more so when the latter is reduced, as so often it is, to instrumental rationality.

Standing on the shoulders of such insightful writers as Geoffrey Vickers, West Churchman, Werner Ulrich, and Peter Checkland, I want to further argue that there are considerable advantages in exploring these two matters from a systems or systemic perspective. This is with the full realisation that by assuming that particular viewpoint, I am further adding to the anti-establishment development movement by challenging the cosiness of its linear (non-systemic) paradigm. The most important point of a systemic approach after all, as Churchman (1971) has emphasised, is that it is committed to ascertaining not simply whether the decision maker's choices leads to the desired ends, but whether they lead to ends which are ethically defensible. Ends, that I submit, can neither be assessed through scientific nor economic rationality.

Finally, in the company of these same writers, I want to reinforce the point that the tenets above reflect the notion of development as a recurring process of learning: with the first proposition indicating the 'purpose' of such learning, and the second hinting strongly at the nature of the process. With my convictions about the usefulness of a systemic paradigm, I shall be exploring learning itself from a systems perspective, and as the focus is on relationship building, I am adopting social capital as my context: the propensity and capability for responsible collective action.

The kernel of my argument is that if communities are to redeem their own destinies from the monocultural poverty of economic imperialism, they need fresh models of learning and methodologies for their own systemic development, to guide them as they seek to learn how 'to do the right thing'. And as any interpretation of the 'right thing' is a function of the appreciative systems of those doing the interpreting, it makes sense to explore this particular construct a little more at this juncture, with reference in particular to the work of Geoffrey Vickers.

Social capital—the wealth of relations

Reflecting back on his own professional lifetime of service to private and public industry in Great Britain, Vickers (1970) was strongly convinced of the inadequacy of goal-setting and seeking as an expression of human achievement. This was a theme to which he would continuously return up to his death in 1982 at the age of 87. It provided the context for his most powerful concept of 'appreciation'—the notion that relationship building (or eluding in the case of undesired situations) involved norms, which individuals develop through experience and then use as their guides or codes for building further relations. It is an ongoing process of learning which Checkland (1981) described in the following manner:

> Our previous experiences have created for us certain 'standards' or 'norms', usually 'tacit' (and also, at a more general level, 'values', more general concepts of what is humanly good and bad); the standards, norms and/or values lead to readiness to notice only certain features of our situations, they determine what 'facts' are relevant; the facts noticed are evaluated against the norms, a process which both leads to our taking regulatory action and modifies the norms or standards, so that future experiences will be evaluated differently (p. 262).

An essential point then is that such appreciation organised as appreciative systems, conditions new experiences while itself being modified by them. Appreciative systems

thus evolve both for individuals and communities where relationship building must perforce include an appreciation of shared appreciative systems. This is a matter to which I will return shortly when discussing the nature of co-learning for the development of social capital.

It is the establishment, maintenance, and growth of networks of relationships which, as I understand it, constitutes the potential of social capital. And it is the erosion of such networks, particularly through emergent individualism, that causes so much concern to writers like Robert Putnam (1993). This is a concern that was clearly articulated by Alex de Tocqueville who, in writing about America more than one hundred and fifty years ago, voiced his worries about individualism, which he posited, 'at first, only saps the virtues of public life, but in the long run ... attacks and destroys all others and is at length absorbed in downright selfishness' (Heffner 1956).

It is in our commitment to community networks and the organisations and institutions within them that surely represent the antidote to the destructive forces of rampant individualism. As Handy (1997) argues, America prefers to put its trust in civil associations rather than Government. It is a society which has defined rights but accepts some civic responsibilities as the norm.

What can we say of Australia in this context? With our trinity of governments, our plethora of bureaucracies, and the overwhelming predominance of the metropolis over the distributed community, whom do we trust? Or perhaps more to the point, is there anybody we trust?

What is the nature of the appreciative systems and settings across our civil associations? Does the spirit of ANZAC (Australia New Zealand Army Corps) 'mateship' prevail? Is our fiercely combative sporting heritage a threat to relationship building? What are the feelings and issues which currently prevail across our communities? How pervasive really is the force of economic rationalism? How far down the track is Australia Inc? What impact will the divisiveness now apparent over major social and cultural issues such as native title and republicanism, have on our ability to make and maintain appreciative relationships across our communities? And what of the ever-present racism and the trenchant xenophobia espoused by the Pauline Hansons of the day? Is such fragmentation in danger of amplifying individualism born of the competitive ethos of economic rationalism? Or will the sheer complexity of our situation facilitate the re-emergence of empathetic communities and the synergy of collective learning and action?

There is certainly little doubt that matters are becoming ever more complex, as the economic perspectives of past decades are being expanded to include social, cultural, political, legal, ideological and, what might loosely be termed environmental, aspects. Many see an appreciation of such factors as heralding the need for a fundamental shift in the way we see ourselves, where the call is increasingly for a more reflexive form of modernity, as we increasingly become what Ulrich Beck refers to as a risk society. 'We are concerned no longer exclusively with making nature useful, or with releasing mankind from traditional constraints, but also and essentially with problems resulting from techno-development itself. Modernisation is becoming reflexive; it is becoming its own theme' (Beck 1992, p. 3).

Risk society

It is almost forty years now since Rachel Carson published her book *Silent Spring* (1963), which gave voice to major concerns about the global environmental impacts of local actions. As Checkland (1981) has emphasised, this book triggered a very significant shift in 'appreciative settings' across the globe with respect to the impacts of industrial degradation. While the 'facts' about this were available for many decades prior to the sixties, there was little readiness to notice and evaluate them until the publication of Carson's book. 'Thereafter the standard of what was acceptable changed sharply as new considerations became regarded facts and new norms emerged. The rise of the conservation movement has followed and these days no industry or Government can now ignore in its activity or legislation the care and maintenance of our small planet; the settings of the appreciative system have changed' (Checkland 1981, p.263). The recent Kyoto convention provides powerful evidence of the internationalisation of the phenomenon.

And there is much more to it than this for, as we become a more reflexive society, so we recognise a host of factors which reflect the risks we now face on a global scale. Even as this is being written we are seeing the re-emergence of the threat of nuclear war, with the focus this time being on the Indian sub-continent, while events in Indonesia reflect amazing and essentially unforeseen dynamics combining complex economic, social, and political issues. These two matters are of global concern for quite different reasons, yet both amply illustrate risks of local actions on a global scale. There is much more to a global risk society than these highly visible discontinuous events, for in this new age of reflexive modernity, there are all sorts of forces for change operating on a global scale. Beck (1994) suggests that one of the major forces for change in this regard is the increasing influence and incidence of unanticipated outcomes of modern, especially industrial life. 'Society is changed not just by what is seen and intended, but also by what is unseen and unintended' (p. 6).

In the early part of the 19th century, textile workers in the north of England smashed power looms and mechanical knitting machines in reaction to what was effectively the substitution of capital for labour, and industrial actions continue to this day as manifestation of the continuing concern for this process. Levels of unemployment and underemployment remain persistently high in many economies in both the so-called developed and developing worlds, while levels of social dissatisfaction with such situations is increasing, as the level of awareness of them being outcomes of modern industrial society spreads. As Beck (1994) and others have emphasised, this dissatisfaction, which is being facilitated by the extraordinary growth in communication technologies and ever-increasing levels of education, is leading to significant challenge to established social structures and systems of authority. Science and technology are included here, as are bureaucratic institutions and government agencies, and indeed the very form of government itself.

Witness the unanticipated events surrounding the collapse of the centrally-planned economies of the former Soviet bloc and of the introduction of democratic elections in the Republic of South Africa. Even within long-standing democracies themselves, significant and profound changes are underway, as politics increasingly becomes the expression of particular interest groups within society.

In essence, we are experiencing sea changes in the norms and nature of communities and societies across the world—the globalisation of environmental risks and other undesirable consequences of industrial modernity is being accompanied by fundamental shifts in

beliefs about the nature of nature and the role of human beings within it—what can be referred to as ontological beliefs. Citizens in countries in many parts of the globe are beginning to shift their exclusive concerns beyond economics to embrace the full complexities of the relationships between the ecology of the planet and the activities of its peoples. Not just because that complexity is being recognised, but because conventional economics itself is proving to be 'an entirely inaccurate view of how people behave in a modern industrial society' (Ormerod 1994).

Social capital itself is acquiring a global nature, as regional and national borders are easily transcended through the technologies of communication. With 'virtual communities' attracting increasing commitments, and people communicating quite freely about these issues across trans-national networks, the matter of appreciative systems and the meanings which are generated through them as perspectives, become part of a universal discourse for change.

This, in turn, is providing a challenge to a second set of beliefs; those concerned with how we can come to know about the nature of nature in the first place—matters of epistemology. Faith in objective scientific 'truth' born of The Enlightenment, has been severely shaken, not just by the obvious inappropriateness of such a rationality for dealing with those moral and ethical aspects of a risk society which are becoming primary in a reflexive modernity, but by the observations of many scientists themselves. How can we learn to decide what it is that we should be doing to improve our relationships with and within it?

Learning systems

Earlier it was submitted that the second tenet of the brewing 'rebellion' was grounded in the recognition that experience, spiritual insight, emotion, and disposition are all as essential as reason, as aspects of how it is that we learn to establish appreciative systems. And this proposition in its way is as radical as the other, in its call for us to shift our appreciative settings to move beyond economics and embrace the 'whole system'. Economics as a discipline firmly reflects its foundations in rationalism: the belief that through reason alone we can 'discover' the nature of nature, without recourse to any experience we might have of it. It is no coincidence that economics is a quantitative science with its intellectual traditions established in the mathematical foundations of Descartes, Leibniz and Spinoza and their belief that as humans, we have innate ideas or knowledge about the world which are prior to our experience of it; and thus necessarily true (Marias 1967).

The growing awareness of the global nature of risks in an industrial society referred to earlier is being accompanied by a growing recognition that there is more to learning than can be provided solely through reason alone. Without having to assume the anti-rationalist arguments of empiricist philosophers like Locke, Berkeley and Hume, it is not difficult to accept that much of what we learn is derived from our experiences. Indeed, as has been argued elsewhere (Bawden 1997), learning itself can be envisioned as a system of inquiry which integrates the process of meaning making through two sub-systems: an experiential sub-system with its source as experience, and an inspirational sub-system, which has innate insight as its source. We can imagine these two sub-systems linked together through a dynamic in which the output of one becomes the input of the other, while reflecting the tension of the differences between them as a necessary precondition of system coherence.

The systems view of learning liberates us immediately from the prevailing and very narrow view of instrumental rationality. Through the agency of inspirational learning, facilitated through 'disengagement' both from the concrete world of experience and the abstract world of concepts, we can access those deeply held insights which reflect our 'spirit'—our essential human-ness. And if we then accept those insights, we can apply them to the concepts we originally generated experientially from our concrete experiences. The first outputs of experiential learning are abstract concepts which are subsequently 'transformed' by insight output from the inspirational process, into meanings. These meanings are then used as the basis for both meaningful plans and actions, one of which of course, is the process of learning itself! So learning is a meaningful action which generates meaningful actions through the transformation of both concrete experience and the abstract concepts derived from it, by 'spiritual' insight.

Now we can see how ethical considerations can transcend the prevailing tendencies for them to be considered solely in consequential (rational) terms. Inspirational learning allows the liberation, and thence synthesis, into 'reason' of those ethical positions which are grounded in notions of 'goodness', 'rightness', 'justice' and so on. This systemic view of learning thus accommodates the Churchman (1971) imperative for the determination of the ethical defensibility of our intentional acts.

The purpose of such a learning system reflects those intentions of the learner(s) who comprise it, while its internal milieu is determined in large part by their emotions.

A vital aspect of this notion of a learning system is that it is fundamentally a social system: meaning is a social activity and meaningful action, a collective activity. It is the currency of social capitalism. People learn from and with other people. We share our experiences, our insights, and the meanings we create out of the synthesis of them both. And we do all this with little, if any, explicit consciousness of the role of perspective or worldview or 'appreciation' in the process. Whether we know it not, our learning systems are, in Vickers (1970) terms 'appreciative systems'—what we learn about the nature of nature and of our relationships with and within it, is a function of the standards, norms and values which we hold about it! In other words, the meanings that we create (or more accurately co-create) reflect all sorts of tacit assumptions which we hold. We observe what we observe, and think what we think about such observations from particular perspectives. And the essence of those perspectives are similarly reflected on what we plan, and what we do. What we know, and how we value that knowledge and its application, are indeed manifestations of our appreciative systems. We are fortunate that these themselves are open to challenge and change, at least when the mood and disposition which prevails as the internal milieu of the learning system, permits. It is most important that we learn how to challenge and change these 'appreciations' which, for convenience, we can simplify to 'perspectives'.

The work of Karen Kitchener (1983) and of Marcia Salner (1986) on cognitive processing, provides a logic which clarifies how this might be accomplished, while being perfectly consistent with the learning system construct.

Kitchener and Salner both recognise the significance of three levels of cognitive processing which can be interpreted in learning terms as:

- learning about the matter to hand (first level learning)
- learning about how we learn about the matter to hand (second level or meta learning)

- learning about the perspectives through which we operate at the first and second levels (third level or epistemic learning).

In other words, as we go about our 'routine' learning about the world about us, we are also able to (a) interrogate how we are doing that (and challenge and change it if appropriate), and (b) interrogate the perspective through which we are 'appreciating' all that is happening in the world about us (and again challenge and change that if appropriate). Here then is the recursive process envisioned by Vickers and described earlier in the quote from Peter Checkland: we view the world with a particular appreciation (from a particular normative perspective), we make sense out of what we view from this perspective, we take action consistent with the perspective while also questioning the nature and influence of that perspective, and we make adjustments to it after reflections on all that has happened (at all three levels of learning).

It is at this epistemic (third) level of learning that we can challenge and change the basis of our rationality, and herein lies one of the great attractions of reflexive modernity and the role of community within it. It is much easier for us to recognise the way we do things and the perspectives which have such an influence on this through information reflexively 'fed back' to us from those with whom we co-learn and collaborate. Thus we are very much more likely to both challenge and change our appreciative systems in response to comments from others, than from self-analysis—no matter how rigorously this is done.

The same is true of our sensitivity to the need for a systemic flux between the experiential and the inspirational. The experiential process is most likely to be conducted from an instrumental rationality while the inspirational process liberates those norms which then significantly influence the meanings we construe and the meaningful actions we take. Cooperation in learning encourages the critical reflexivity so fundamental to the systemic flux between these two domains.

A general conclusion

The need for systemic thinking is central to the argument for collective learning about those complex, multi-dimensional circumstances which typically characterise a risk society. Systemic perspectives accommodate complexity by focusing less on causality and more on relationships. And this is as appropriate to communities themselves, and the social capital which they both represent and develop, as it is to the processes they use to develop it. It is, as we have seen, also entirely appropriate as a construct for the learning process which is the very currency of the formation of social capital: a process which has two basic subsystems (experiential and inspirational) operating within it, and which is self-reflexive through the engagement of learning at three different levels within the system (learning, meta learning and epistemic learning).

Communities of collaborators establish, maintain, and develop 'appreciative relationships' through reflexive co-learning activities. The purpose of these 'learning systems' is to facilitate adjustment to changing circumstances, which invariably will also result in changes in the systems themselves, especially with respect to their appreciative settings.

It is through such dynamics that the instrumental rationality of economics, which has so dominated human affairs for the past few decades, can be effectively challenged and changed in order that actions more appropriate to the messy complexity of reflexive

modernity can be taken and in a context which allows their ethical defensibilities to be evaluated.

As Vickers (1983) would have it: the conditions for survival are cultural rather than technological; they require for societies, groups and individuals to reset their appreciative systems, their standards of what to expect, what to attempt, and what to put up with, to an extent which people have not previously achieved or needed.

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CHAPTER 4
Sustainability for regional development: Integrating the models

Barbara Geno

While numerous articles and papers have addressed the three primary aspects of sustainability, less attention has gone to how to integrate these three aspects in furthering sustainable regional development. This paper reviews efforts which have been made to develop regional-level management schemes which seek social, environmental, and economic sustainability. In these schemes, the components of sustainability tend to be viewed in a hierarchical manner and the aspects of environmental sustainability and economic viability usually dominate. The issues of social sustainability are often left to be operationalised at the national level. However, the concepts of human ecology may be applied to the challenge of integrating the social and economic aspects of sustainability at the regional level. In addition, social impact analysis also offers a technique to operationalise social sustainability at the community, or regional, level. These social approaches to sustainability serve to provide mechanisms for truly integrating the social, economic, and environmental aspects of sustainability.

Introduction

Development as a modern concept usually means the progression to a 'higher' stage of civilisation with greater social and political complexity and a larger economy in terms of the amount and kind of resources used. Development is generally viewed as offering an improved quality of life or wellbeing. Despite the greater complexity of society and greater control over nature, it is now perceived that many of the impacts that humans have on the environment are detrimental. Therefore, concern has developed with regard to having human development which is 'sustainable development'. The concept of sustainable development has been agreed in Australia as 'ecologically sustainable development', which integrates the three aspects of social, economic, and environmental sustainability.

Ecologically sustainable development (ESD)

In the late 1980s, a Federal process in Australia was started to implement internationally agreed conventions for sustainable development. A compendium of ESD recommendations and State government responses was released in 1992 with strategies for implementation. These initiatives direct the funding for ESD in Australia and are having an impact on regional communities. The general objectives of ESD in Australia were refined into provision for:

- improvement in material and non-material wellbeing;
- intergenerational and intragenerational equity;
- maintenance of ecological systems and protection of biodiversity; and
- dealing cautiously with risk, uncertainty and irreversibility (ESD Working Group 1991, p. 6).

Many researchers agree that sustainability requires the integration of viable economies, viable ecosystems, and viable communities to create a sustainable global society that has a stable and secure natural resource base and can be maintained indefinitely. Therefore, the moral obligation to meet 'the needs of the present without compromising the ability of

future generations to meet their own needs' is the central mandate of sustainable development (World Commission on Environment and Development 1987, p. 87). From this vague mandate, Australian communities have the responsibility of demonstrating that the objectives of sustainability are being met.

The three platforms of sustainability—systems approach

A systems approach has been used to identify the basic elements of sustainable development (Barbier 1987). In attempting to coordinate the various elements of ecology, economics and community, Barbier (1987, p. 104) outlined biological systems goals (genetic diversity, resilience, biological productivity), economic system goals (satisfying basic needs, increasing useful goods and services, equity enhancing) and social system goals (cultural diversity, social justice, participation). While Barbier's model suggests that these are separate systems, in practical reality they are interlinked both physically and socially. Attempts to model these as integrated systems have been made. However, a good deal of the literature of sustainability contains a discourse which is based on the separate nature of these systems.

In the next section, the issues of integrating the three aspects of sustainability are explored and some models which fit the conditions of integrating the three aspects of sustainability are discussed.

Integrated models of sustainability

A number of different conceptual models have the potential to fulfil the conditions of social, economic, and environmental sustainability. They are found in a diverse literature spanning natural resource management, ecosystem management, and human ecology. There are two identifiable approaches to integrating the three aspects of sustainability. The units chosen to operationalise sustainability distinguish them: units defined by natural systems or units defined by human social systems.

Natural systems models

Natural systems models support the characteristics of ESD through the use of collective (group) values. The value orientation varies from ecocentric to anthropocentric (nature-centred versus human-centred), depending upon the approach to the ecological goals of natural resource management. How the 'region' is identified determines the basis for decision-making about resource allocation and use. Two schools of thought have developed: bioregion-level and ecosystem-level management. Bioregions are geographical divisions, often divided on the basis of water catchment. Ecosystems are divided on the basis of common climate, geomorphology and species which may or may not coincide with bioregions. While these two forms of resource management are similar, distinctions between them have been drawn in the literature.

BIOREGIONALISM

In bioregionalism, the primary focus is on the development of self-reliant economic, social, and political systems within a geographical region. An extreme concept of self-reliance is proposed in bioregionalism in an effort to ensure that humans stay within the carrying capacity of the region. Natural resource management in a bioregion is focused on systems of production which 'draw on local resources, do not degrade the ecosphere, and require people to consider the long term ecological implications of production versus short term economic gain' (Diffenderfer & Birch 1997, p. 5). Thus ecological considerations are

given priority in bioregionalism. The economic system of bioregionalism, with its the focus on self-reliance, is in conflict with the present reality of globalisation of economies.

ECOSYSTEM MANAGEMENT

Ecosystem management is an even narrower concept than bioregionalism. Priority in this model is given to ecosystem health and diversity in the interests of fulfilling the ESD objective of the maintenance of ecological systems and protection of biodiversity. Norton (1992, pp. 24–25) suggests that ecosystem management can offer guidance as to the form of a sustainable human society through imitation of the ecosystem's self-organising principles. In this type of sustainability, ecological considerations are of the highest order and it is suggested that society and economics should mimic ecological systems. The approach to natural resource allocation is concerned with the empowerment of individuals at the local level and reinforces group values. Ecosystem-based management is complex and requires a trans-disciplinary focus. This trans-disciplinary focus has been suggested as ideal for integrating social, economic, and environmental aspects of ecosystem management.

In Australia, ecosystem-based management is being trialled through water catchment planning. The Murray Darling Basin initiative could also be considered ecosystem-based as well. Planning at the water catchment level recognises water catchments as integrated systems which are affected by the activities of individuals and businesses within the catchment area. The catchment committees, as political appointments, vary in their effectiveness. In most cases, they are not representative of the local community but rather reflect local power relationships and therefore do not meet the aim of social justice contained in ESD.

Problems with natural resource based models

One problem with these regional concepts of sustainability is that their focus on geographical regions and individual ecosystems suggests a provincial form of development which contrasts strongly with the trend toward globalisation in national economies. Many Australian regions rely upon traditional economic growth forces through the development of resource-based industries, by capitalising on the natural assets of the region or simply by attracting manufacturing to the region through competing with other regions. Economic development and measures of success under bioregionalism and ecosystem management forces local communities to capitalise on environmentally-benign industries such as recreation and tourism. It also directs them to develop sustainable economic activities based on regionally-available and sustainably-managed natural and social resources. Therefore, the natural systems approaches constrain the type of activities local residents might adopt to develop their resources.

Human ecology-based systems

Machlis, Force and Burch (1997) proposed a form of ecosystem management which uses the human ecosystem as the self-organising principle. The key elements of the human ecosystem are defined as critical resources (natural, socio-economic, and cultural), social institutions, social cycles and social order, all of which are measurable (Machlis, Force & Burch 1997, p. 347). This paradigm of natural resources management seeks to include humans in the system and to give priority to the social goals of sustainability as the highest-order principle. Thus the human ecosystem is defined as 'a coherent system of biophysical and social factors capable of adaptation and sustainability over time' (Machlis, Force & Burch 1997, p. 351). It is suggested that the model could be used as the

organising framework for social impact assessments and has the potential for integrating the three aspects of sustainability through multi-scaled measures.

In contrast to the two paradigms of natural resource management which priorise the ecological goals of sustainability (perhaps ecocentric in scope), the human ecology paradigm places humans at the centre of decision-making and their social welfare comes first. In view of the anthropocentric definition of sustainability (having to do only with human present and future generations), this paradigm may receive wide acceptance. In Australia, this would facilitate the ESD process through enhancing the participative process at the local level by placing ecosystem management at the local level.

Socioeconomic indicators of sustainability

While considerable attention has been devoted to the development of indicators of ecological sustainability and the development of market and non-market mechanisms to assure the ecological soundness of human development, less attention has been devoted to the development of socioeconomic indicators of sustainability. Numerous proposals have been made to integrate the social and economic aspects of human society into models which account for the biosphere. What are also required are more accurate measures for intergenerational and intragenerational equity as critical components in ecologically sustainable development. In addition, measures are required to determine whether or not there is increasing material and non-material wellbeing. Two techniques have been identified which attempt to address such questions of measurement.

Social indicators in human ecosystem management

Using the human ecosystem model, social and economic indicators using widely available data can be developed which can monitor social conditions, allow comparison between regions, and evaluate human ecosystem responses to resource management actions while allowing the development of information suitable for collaborative decision making (Force & Machlis 1997). The goal of these indicators is to track the flow of materials and energy between society and nature in order to achieve sustainability. The use of social and economic indicators in the human ecosystem model allows data which is already collected to be utilised in order to track sustainability, and has great scope for the development of indicators which address intragenerational equity.

Social impact analysis

Concern for the environmental impact of human activities has long been a consideration for the activities planned as part of regional development. These are often undertaken in concert with economic measures, such as conventional cost-benefit analysis. The traditional cost-benefit analysis may be expanded to consider social impacts which include costs to individuals or communities. For any development or human activity, measures may be taken of the social costs in terms of compromised health, increased deaths, increased poverty from unemployment, and so on. This may be applied at the regional level. The focus of this type of measurement is individual development activities. It may also be expressed on a national level through examination of national economic activity and national development activities. This type of social impact research is *post facto* and focuses on the effects of development after it has taken place.

Another approach to social impact analysis is to conduct *ex ante* research to evaluate the effects, good and bad, of a proposed development activity. Socio-psychological variables such as attitudes, beliefs, values and opinions are measured in order to decide what social

impacts the development activity will have on the local community. The existence of different value and belief systems within a community offers challenges to the construction of a social impact statement. The existence of overlapping projects in a given region also complicates the use of this technique. However, *ex ante* studies in communities can signal conflict over resources which might emerge. For example, Greider and Little (1988) were able to predict conflict between social groups in Utah resulting from transference of water from agriculture to energy generation. Some understanding of conflict over resources in communities is essential, as many regional development projects are mutually exclusive.

Implications of models of integration

In examining the models proposed with which to integrate the three aspects of sustainability, two observations can be made. The first is that these models tend to ignore the forces of globalisation taking place at the international level in economies, the ecological effects of human activity, trade, and the standardisation of environmental and other regulations. The second is that many of the models implicitly rank the three aspects, which is contrary to the systems approach of integration.

Issues of globalisation

There is an emerging view that sustainable development will be framed by global institutions and the incentives and opportunities offered by supranational institutions governing trade. In integrating the economic aspect of sustainability, reliance is often placed on valuing ecosystem services and properties and using market mechanisms in order to influence decision-making toward sustainable outcomes. The market mechanisms tend to be operationalised at the national and international level, rather than at the local and ecosystem level. This goes against the aims of the natural resource management paradigms of bioregionalism and ecosystem management.

Ranking the aspects of sustainability

While the term 'integrating' suggests an evenness of the process, the various proposals for operationalising sustainability do not evenly integrate. In some approaches, the integration becomes a 'nesting' of the different aspects. In others, ranking results in preference being given to one of the aspects which determines the conditions under which the other aspects will operate. At present, there appears to be no model of sustainability which *fully integrates* the three aspects of social, economic, and ecological goals by *balancing* the three elements.

The models, which priorise the environment over economics and social aspects, alarm regional communities, which are resource dependent. The approaches which priorise economics alarm environmentalists and others in the community, who feel that natural resources are undervalued (or not valued) in conventional economic analyses. Few if any attempts to operationalise sustainability have put the social system first. This latter option needs to be considered in the design of regional sustainability models.

Implications for regional sustainability

When considering regional development, it is fairly evident that the federal ESD initiatives lead to a confusing array of different development projects and community programs. While these may be a reflection of the multiplicity of community values and beliefs, some of the confusion is probably not necessary. Many efforts focused on meeting

community needs for employment and strengthened economies focused on ecosystem management, such as Catchment Strategies and Landcare. Peak industry bodies, such as the National Farmers Federation, are also impacting on environmental management through the development of codes of practice. Local governments are involved in community development and ESD through initiatives under Agenda 21, the agreement to implement sustainable development worldwide.

Regional and rural development strategies need to plan to achieve desired regional and rural development outcomes, encourage and support builders and leaders in regional communities, recognise the importance of community-based solutions to local issues, and provide appropriate infrastructure and service enhancement. From an examination of the different priorities, which can be placed on the three aspects of sustainability, it can be seen that the decision-making process involved will be influenced by whether there is a priority of social, ecological, or economic goals. Different integrations are also possible depending upon whether a collective (group values and democratic participation) or individualistic approach is taken to resource allocation decisions. This paper reported on the possibilities, which are found supporting the collective approach.

In each of the models reviewed in this paper, the focus for resource allocation and the determination of the priority of the three aspects of sustainability differed. The natural systems models are eco-centred while the human-ecosystem model is anthropocentric. The first two result in a narrowly-based focus for the economic system, which contrasts with present trends toward the globalisation of economies. In contrast, the human ecosystem model could be expanded beyond the region to interlock with larger human ecosystems at the national and international level. That is, there is scope for combining economic and social indicators with those from larger systems. The human ecosystem approach also provides a coherent framework for the collection of data, which will lead to comprehensive measurement of social, ecological and economic sustainability for Australian regions, which acknowledges the impact of humans on the environment.

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CHAPTER 5
Community psychology, planning and learning: An applied social ecology approach to sustainable development

Douglas Perkins

An ecological framework for sustainable community development and social capital is presented. Three current examples of sustainable community planning and development in the United States are briefly discussed: co-housing, asset-based community development, and new urbanism. A participatory action research process and service learning, an educational movement in the United States, are discussed as collaborative learning communities. It is concluded that sustainability should be defined not only in economic and traditional ecological terms, but also in terms of a social ecology that includes the development of community psychological ties (sense of community, communitarianism, place attachment, pride in one's home and community, community confidence and satisfaction), as well as neighbouring, citizen participation, and organisational efficacy.

This chapter presents an ecological model of sustainable community development, several psychological concepts that further our understanding of such development and five very different, and currently popular, movements in community planning and learning which exemplify various aspects of sustainable development. The examples and the research on those concepts, which resulted in the model, are mainly from urban and suburban neighbourhoods in the United States But they are based on fundamental human social and psychological needs, attitudes, perceptions, emotions, and behaviours. And so they may apply equally well to regional Australia, despite the unique aspects of its current crisis. The implications for the sustainability of rural areas are considered.

Furthermore, I was trained as a community and environmental psychologist and have emphasised here the importance of considering psychological concepts of sustainable development. But my research is inter-disciplinary, in terms of both theory and methods used to assist and study community development organisations. And so I consider my approach to be explicitly applied and 'ecological', but do not call it 'psychological,' 'urban,' or 'American' because I think it is more broadly applicable than those terms imply.

An ecological framework for sustainable community development

The following theoretical framework for sustainable community learning and development (see Figure 1) interprets sustainability in two ways, which may be both familiar and unfamiliar. First, sustainability ought to imply an ecological consciousness. But sustainable development theories, research, programs, and policies do not always take a completely ecological perspective in terms of carefully considering the systemic interrelationships among the social, political, economic, and physical environment. (For more in-depth ecological analyses of community organisation, development, and empowerment, see Perkins, Brown & Taylor, 1996; Kroeker, 1995; Speer & Hughey, 1995; Perkins et al. 1990).

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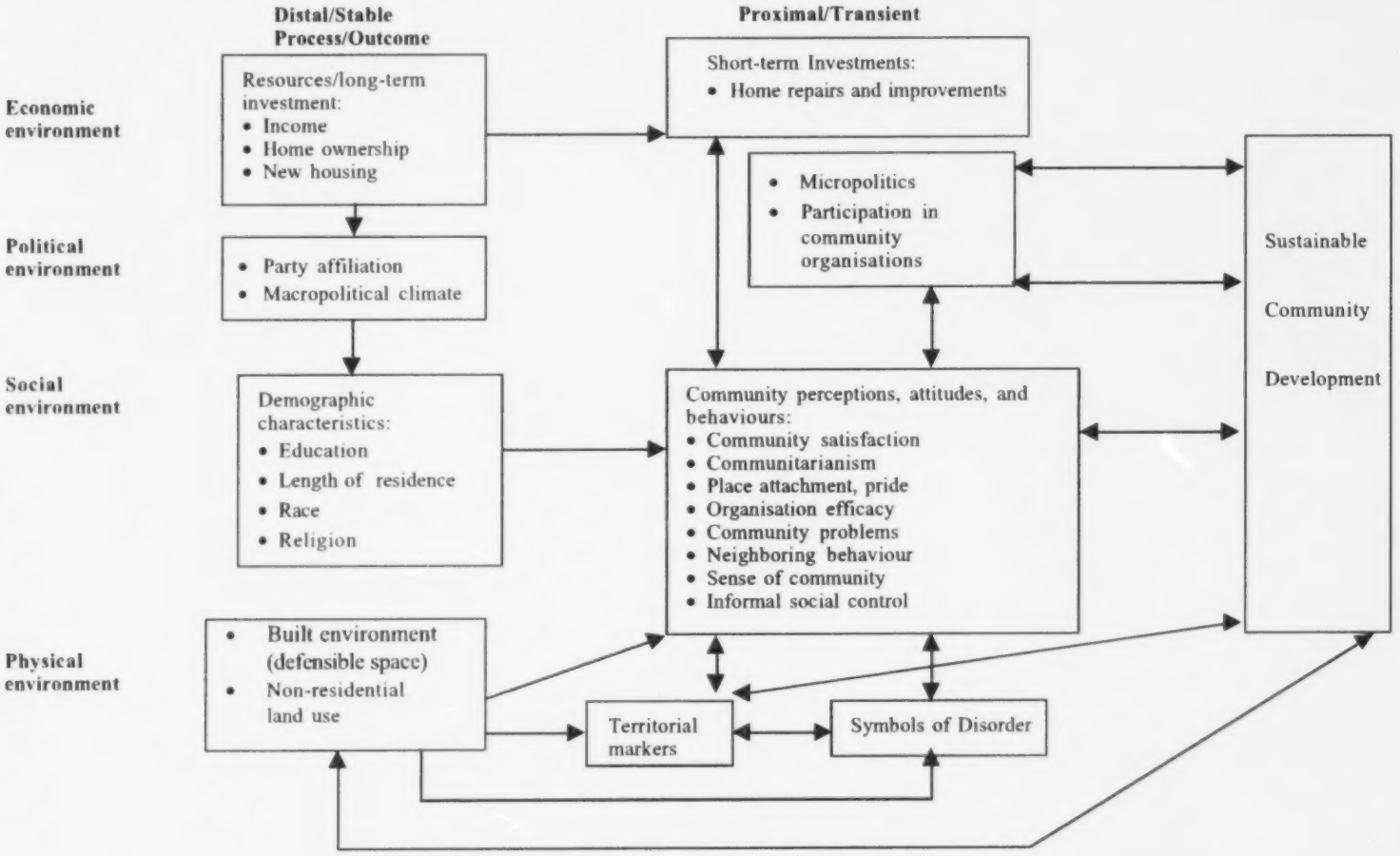
Figure 1: An ecological framework for sustainable community development



The model was originally formulated and tested for predicting citizen participation in grass-roots community organisations as well as predicting community disorder problems, such as crime and fear (Perkins et al.1990). But it may be even more appropriate for analysing community development and sustainability more broadly because, by its nature, community development is about improving the economic, social, political, and physical environment.

What makes this framework ecological is that it attempts to delineate the relevant factors associated with sustainable community learning and development outcomes in each of these environmental domains and at multiple levels of analysis. But the most important dimension of the framework may be the distinction between more distal, stable or even permanent predictors and proximal, transient or changeable predictors. Stable factors include such economic resources as income and property ownership, party affiliation and macro-political climate, demographic characteristics, such as education, length of residence, race, and religion, and the built environment, including residential, non residential, and open land uses. The problem with stable factors is that by definition they are difficult or impossible to change. Transient factors include short-term economic investments (such as home or capital repairs and improvements), the level of participation in grassroots community organisations, and in particular, community perceptions, attitudes, and behaviours, which are discussed in more depth below.

Community development and social capital

The second way in which sustainability may be both familiar and unfamiliar is that it implies the development and maintenance of community 'social capital,' or participation. Two environmental psychologists (Saegert & Winkel 1998) found social capital to consist of two informal factors (informal participation, or what others and I call neighbouring behaviour, and perceived pro-social norms) and two formal factors (leadership activity and basic voluntary participation). It is important to carefully examine and understand the differences between both forms of social capital, formal and informal participation, but also the various factors and processes that make up and is related to each form.

At the risk of sacrilege, let me voice a concern with social capital in that, like 'empowerment' and possibly 'sustainability', it has become a conceptually vague buzzword which is being used by many different people to mean many different things or, in some cases, to mean very little. In the Utah State legislature, the Social Capital Enhancement Act requires government workers to turn away all first requests for services, no matter how legitimate, and forces those in need to seek those services in the already overburdened private community service sector. Only if that fails can citizens go back to state government for help.

Community psychology and environmental psychology

The fields of community and environmental psychology have developed a tremendous amount of theory, research, and action on the specific stable elements and transient processes of the social and physical environment of communities listed in Figure 1. Environmental psychology focuses on the influence of the physical environment on human behaviour. In addition to the more or less permanent, and generally larger, features of the architectural and planning environment (Plas & Lewis 1996; see 'new urbanism', below), much of the work in this area has explored the social and psychological impact of more transient, and therefore malleable, physical features. These include both positive signs of territoriality (Brown 1987), such as cleaning up and beautifying one's home exterior or community, and also negative symbols of disorder in depressed areas, such as physical deterioration, litter, graffiti, vandalism, and poor property maintenance (Perkins et al. 1990, 1996).

Community psychology has focused on tangible behaviours such as informal neighbouring, informal social control (or people's willingness to intervene to uphold community standards of behaviour), and my own special interest: formal citizen participation in grassroots community organisations (Saegert & Winkel 1998; Perkins et al. 1990, 1996; Speer & Hughey 1995; Unger & Wandersman 1985). It has also focused on important community-focused perceptions, such as the awareness of community problems and confidence in the future of one's community and in the efficacy of local community organisations in dealing with those problems.

Both community and environmental psychologists have closely studied what constitutes and how to encourage various kinds of community psychological ties, such as sense of community (Plas & Lewis 1996), communitarianism (or the value people place on their community and on working collectively to improve it; Perkins et al. 1990), place attachment (which can be a valuable resource to individuals, families, and communities; Perkins et al. 1996), community satisfaction (which my research has found to be positively related to perceived community problems, not negatively i.e. those who perceive more problems are more satisfied with their community as a place to live; Perkins et al. 1990, 1996). The latest psychological tie my colleague Barbara Brown and I have begun to study is home and community pride.

Examples of sustainable community planning and development in the United States

Cohousing

Cohousing (McCamant & Durrett 1994; cohousing web site www.cohousing.org/) is a collaborative housing movement which started in Denmark 30 years ago as an antidote to the alienation of modern suburban life and has, since the late 1980s, spread to about 75 developments in the United States (with another 50 or so currently in progress). At present there are three cohousing developments in Australia, two in Hobart, Tasmania, the other in Freemantle, WA with more in the planning stages. Cohousing communities are like self-help/mutual aid groups in that the planning, design, decision-making, and daily life of these intentional communities is highly participatory, consensus-oriented, and communal. Professional architects and planners may be involved in the building process, although they are viewed as necessary, although ancillary, expert resources.

The design, cost, and communal life of cohousing developments vary. But all have a shared community building in addition to (in most cases) 20 to 30 private single-family dwellings, a certain number of weekly communal meals and other activities, and a layout that keeps motor vehicles on the periphery of the community. Many share childcare and other human and material resources.

Asset-based community development (ABCD)

A team of Chicago-based community development researchers and consultants have developed a popular approach to mobilising community resources (Kretzmann & McKnight 1993; ABCD web site www.nwu.edu/IPR/abcd.html). They begin by criticising the needs, deficits, or problem-focused orientation of traditional development policies and programs, which tend to blame entire communities as victims. They argue that this serves the vested interests of service providers, policy-makers, and social scientists, but disempowers the community and makes them dependent on services that, in recent years, have been disappearing in both urban and rural areas.

In contrast, ABCD is a practical and systematic strategy for releasing individual and local organisational capacities; mapping community social, physical (space), and economic assets; building relationships among those assets; mobilising the community for economic development and information sharing; developing a community vision and development plan; and leveraging outside resources to support that locally controlled plan.

New urbanism

New urbanism, or neo-traditional or transit-oriented design, is the most important movement in American architecture and urban and regional planning in the past 20 years (Katz 1994; new urbanism web sites www.cnu.org/ and www.interlog.com/~oppi/hot_tops.htm#1). The new urbanism encourages mixed, or at least proximal, commercial and residential land use with multi-modal public transport hubs; a reduction in automobile traffic and orientation, and community civic centres dispersed to create smaller, more tight-knit communities than one typically finds in most of modern suburbia.

Like cohousing, the new urbanism also uses slightly smaller and multi-unit residential properties and so higher population density in order to preserve nearby open space for parks, farms, and bushland. It is an attempt to plan and design to encourage all the community psychological ties and behaviours I have discussed, including sense of community, and informal social control through greater use of outdoor space (Plas & Lewis 1996). Its scope may give it greater potential for social and cultural change compared to cohousing. But it has thus far paid less attention to the learning and participatory aspects of community building than either cohousing or ABCD.

Examples of collaborative learning communities in the United States

Participatory action research

This is based on the work of Fals Borda and Rahman (1991). The original study that produced and tested the ecological framework for community development I presented was the Block Booster Project. It was funded by the Ford Foundation to examine the role of residential block associations in community development and crime control. It was participatory in that community leaders were involved from the beginning as collaborators in the formulation of all aspects of project design. And it was action research in that one central aspect was a series of workshops to help the block associations and leaders improve the functioning and viability of their organisations (Florin et al. 1992). We provided both general practical informations on managing voluntary associations as well as survey-based and other data specific to their local blocks to help them know how members and other residents felt about community, organisational, and leadership issues and problems. The result was the creation of neighbourhood-based learning communities of resident leaders and researchers.

Service-learning

Service-learning—the testing and illumination of primary, secondary, college, or graduate course content through participatory student projects that address local needs—is currently a hot pedagogical movement in the United States (see service-learning web site: http://csf.colorado.EDU:80/sl/). It may seem like merely the kind of practical or experiential learning that is as old as vocational or professional training or simply good teaching. But there are some new principles, such as varied opportunities for individual and group reflection, which in combination constitute a new and uniquely community-focused learning process. Service learning is of course, perfectly suited for community development-related courses (Reardon 1994).

Service-learning takes the idea of a 'learning community' very literally and seriously in exploring concrete ways to bring students, local government officials, community development practitioners and researchers, and community residents and leaders together to learn and benefit from each other. It adds reality and relevance to the curriculum by bringing to life dry classroom materials, by showing how social processes really work (and often do not work as planned) in the unpredictable and complex world of Realpolitik, and by giving students skills, experience, and connections that often lead to employment opportunities.

More often than not, service learning is a 'win-win-win-win situation.' The winners are (1) the instructor, whose teaching is brought to life and made more relevant through application to the 'real world'; (2) the students, who almost unanimously report getting a lot more out of the course, not only practical skills and experience and a 'foot in the door' of a potential employer, but also greater political awareness and a more developed sense of communitarianism and civic responsibility; (3) the clients of the host organisation, who usually get more personal attention and energetic bodies to help with their problems; and (4) the host organisations, who get unskilled, semi-skilled, and even skilled labour and a chance to test the performance of possible future workers, both at little to no cost.

I have incorporated service learning into almost all the courses I have taught at the University of Utah. About a thousand undergraduates and ten graduate students have helped plan, conduct, and report on my various community service/research projects, which have provided useful information to a wide variety of public and private organisations (including community councils, service agencies, an ecumenical religious service and anti-poverty advocacy organisation, and various city agencies and councils) with whom the students worked. The projects also had a clearly positive and lasting impact on the students' learning, as evidenced by their application of ideas and observations from the project to later course work.

Here is an example of a typical community service-learning project in one of my classes. In late 1995, a city council man contacted me. The local Redevelopment Agency (RDA) was about to designate a portion of his district a blighted area and he, the RDA, and the local community council wanted a community needs assessment to guide redevelopment plans. This project involved two classes, a total of 50 students, plus some campus community service centre volunteers. The goals for the project were: (a) canvassing the neighbourhood, distributing community service information, and conducting resident and small business interviews; (b) identifying potential block leaders throughout the target neighbourhood; (c) helping those leaders develop organising plans based on data specific to their own block as well as neighbourhood-level information, and (d) involving students in community research and community action. The student-written project report went to all the above groups and leaders and also the local community police officers and the other city council man from the area. In addition, forums were held at the university, first to present the neighbourhood results and later to discuss the organising plans.

Implications for regional sustainability

As stated at the outset, although these examples come mainly from the American urban experience, they may be equally relevant to regional development in other industrialised nations. For example, some of the latest cohousing developments are in rural areas. One of the more intriguing sustainability innovations can be found in a new cohousing community in remote Southern Utah. It has incorporated a variety of environmentally sound features, including straw bale construction which, compared with traditional materials, is more affordable and energy efficient. Even more than other cohousing groups, the Circle Springs

Community also works hard at building a community both socially and spiritually (web site: www.gi.net/~wgaia/circlesprings/). What could be a more appropriate intervention approach in regions experiencing disinvestment and out migration than asset-based community development? Rural communities have a wealth of cheap land, buildings, labour, and other assets, which may be used to either attract new investment or promote social capital and the 'cycling of resources'.

New urbanism may seem like the least relevant example for *regional* sustainability. But, in fact, it is one of the few planning strategies that takes a multi-level approach, from building design features all the way up to regional population and economic growth and transportation policies. Rural regions have many small to mid-sized towns and cities where, because land is cheap, sprawl and industrialisation are threatening the quality of life (both in towns and on farms and ranches) more so than in older, more densely settled cities. The most important new urbanist planning principle for regional sustainability may be the restriction of strip commercial development in order to maintain 'main street' economic vitality and mixed residential and commercial land use in downtown areas.

Participatory action research and service-learning are powerful strategies for applying the concept of social capital to the creation of locally specific, practical knowledge and learning communities. As long as there is a single community development professional or para professional (a trained amateur) and students (of any age and area of study) or resident volunteers, these strategies can be used to address any kind of problem in rural areas just as well as cities.

Conclusion

The most important test of these five or, for that matter, any experiments in community building and the creation of learning communities, may be their sustainability. I further believe that sustainability must be defined not only in economic and traditional ecological terms, but also in terms of a social ecology that goes beyond the idea of people as capital, to include the development of community psychological ties (such as a sense of community, communitarianism, place attachment, pride in one's home and community, community confidence and satisfaction), as well as neighbouring, citizen participation, and organisational efficacy. Neither communities nor voluntary associations can long be sustained without them.

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PART TWO

Issues related to learning for change

CHAPTER 6
Education as economic and individual development: Toward education through occupations

W Norton Grubb

In regions and countries experiencing economic problems, the use of schools to enhance economic development often leads to narrow forms of vocational education and training. However, this tactic is usually counter-productive, and services neither employers nor youth themselves well. This chapter will outline a broader and more integrated approach to occupational preparation, drawing on developments in several developed countries facing roughly the same economic challenges. The advantages of linking youth to both school and future employment are clarified.

With changes in employment, a common pattern in advanced countries is to call on schools to reform, in order to prepare individuals for new forms of work. Most obviously, this has been the pattern behind the efforts in many countries to define the 'key'or 'core' skills required in production driven by new information, communication, and research-based technologies. However, this pattern also holds when regions go through economic changes, including the waxing and waning of different sectors. While the particulars of this process vary—depending on whether the industries in decline are agricultural or industrial, and on the possibilities for new sectors to emerge—the impulse to use schools in the process of economic development and transformation is common.

Such reforms obviously reinforce the pressures on schools to emphasise occupational purposes over the other purposes—intellectual, moral, or political, for example—that formal education might serve. However, these occupational pressures can be interpreted in either narrow or broad ways. When they are narrowly constructed, the result is a turn to a traditional kind of vocational education—one that prepares individuals for specific jobs in entry-level positions. All too often this approach, common across the English-speaking countries, has led to forms of occupational preparation that seem inequitable because they prepare students for second-class occupations, and that are criticised for being too distant from the academic subjects that lead to the highest-status occupations as well as serving more intellectual purposes. And job-specific preparation requires precise forecasts of employment opportunities; otherwise students are trained for jobs that don't exist, undermining both individual mobility and the very economic development that motivated the reform.

An alternative is to adopt broader forms of occupational preparation, particularly those that integrate vocational and academic education. In part, these efforts respond to demands for a skilled workforce for high-performance workplaces, where flexibility, independence, and a broader range of higher-order skills are necessary. In addition, they respond to the uncertainty about what employment will be available since they are not focused on specific jobs, but rather on broad categories of occupations. They also help resolve status problems created by the separation of vocational from academic education; particularly in Europe, such reforms have been developed in order to equalise the 'parity of esteem' between academic and occupational education. In effect, these reforms imply that both vocational education with its overly-specific training, and academic education with its tendency to become too abstract and decontextualised, have abandoned the requirements of work.

Developments in different countries

Such efforts at developing integrated programs have taken place in a number of countries. In the United States, integration efforts begun during the 1980s were supported by federal legislation in 1990. By now a number of innovations have developed under several

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different names; some have called these efforts 'education through occupations', to stress the Deweyan roots of such reforms; others have referred to them as 'college and careers', reflecting the dual purposes of preparing secondary students for further education or employment or a combination of the two; others have labelled them 'school to work' programs or even the 'new vocationalism'. In Great Britain, the vocationalisation of education after 1976, when Prime Minister Callahan highlighted the country's competitive problems, led to a variety of experiments. Pressure for more accountable forms of vocational education generated the narrowly vocational National Vocational Qualifications; then, in recognition that a broader approach incorporating more academic skills was necessary, the General National Vocational Qualifications (GNVQs) were created in 1992, incorporating several 'core skills' and intended to reduce the 'academic-vocational divide' and establish 'parity of esteem' with academic credentials. In Australia, the 1993 Wiltshire report argued for the integration of academic and vocational education, with an emphasis on creating different academic and vocational pathways through secondary schools while preserving options for post secondary education. Apparently the articulation of key competencies has encouraged schools to adopt integrated programs; perhaps 40 to 60 per cent of secondary schools now have such programs, usually 'parallel' programs in which students take both academic and occupational courses, with little integration at the level of the classroom. Integration practices are also appearing in Canada, particularly in locally developed programs of 'applied academics'.

However, approaches to integration vary widely. In some cases, vocational programs simply incorporate standard academic content—math drills, conventional reading comprehension, short essays—without integrating them with any vocational content or shifting to more constructivist teaching. GNVQs appear to be particularly susceptible to such 'bolt-on' approaches: despite a debate about embedding core skills in vocational applications (in place of non-embedded approaches), the key skills are taught as separate modules, by different instructors, using conventional materials drawn from academic instruction. This in turn undermines the purpose of 'bridging the academic-vocational divide' because there isn't any bridging within instruction itself.

More elaborated forms of integration include 'applied academics' courses, which present the content of reading, writing, math, or basic science with their vocational applications. Still more substantial efforts involve matching academic and vocational instructors, in 'learning communities' where two or three academic and vocational instructors co-teach several related courses.

Restructuring secondary schools

Some of the most promising practices—at least in the United States—are forms of integration that change the basic structure of the secondary school:

- Career academies operate as schools-within-schools. Typically, four teachers collaborate: one each in math, english, and science, and one in the occupational area that defines the academy—health, electronics, pre-engineering, transportation, finance, tourism, or any of a number of broad occupational groupings. Each class of students takes all four subjects from these teachers, and they stay with the same teachers for two or three years. Other subjects—social studies, history, foreign languages, and other electives—are taken in the 'regular' high school, outside the Academy. One essential element, then, is that a group of teachers works with one group of students and with each other consistently, over a period of years. The opportunities for coordinating their courses, including special projects that cut across three or four

classes, are substantial; and because each academy is focused on a cluster of occupations it becomes relatively natural to integrate occupational applications into academic courses. A second essential element is a relationship with firms operating in the occupational area of an academy. Firms typically provide mentors to all students, often send individuals to talk about particular aspects of their operations, give tours of their facilities, and offer summer internships for students. These represent other sources of instruction and motivation (cognitive, behavioural, and financial) in addition to those provided by teachers.

Academies also create communities of both students and teachers, because of their small scale—contrasting with the chaos and anonymity of large high schools. The community of students is crucial to teaching methods involving cooperative group work, and the community of teachers helps not only with curriculum integration, but also with identifying problems that individual student have. Since teachers come to know individual students much better than can most high school teachers, it is harder for students to become 'lost' in an academy. Entering an academy requires a choice on the student's part, with all the benefits associated with active choice—including greater interest in the academy's subject and a closer identification with a school that has been voluntarily chosen. At the same time, the need for students to make *informed* choices forces the issue of guidance into the open, and many schools instituting academies have found it necessary to improve their counselling.

- In some schools, students choose a cluster, or career path, or 'major', often at the beginning or end of tenth grade. As in the case of academies, clusters are usually broad occupational or industry-based groupings, reflecting local labour market opportunities. The cluster then structures the curriculum for the remaining two or three years of high school, with students taking some coursework in the occupational area of the cluster—often a two-period class over the entire two-or three-year period—while other subjects are taken in regular classes 'outside' the cluster. Some schools provide recommended sequences of academic courses; and a few schools have replaced conventional discipline-based departments with departments organised along occupational lines, so that students take all their conventional academic courses within the cluster. The organisation provides focus for each student; each cluster has an obvious theme, and the required course sequence reduces the 'milling around' so common in high schools.

  Clusters are somewhat like academies, except that every student elects a cluster or major. Clusters therefore have all the potential of academies to create a focus within which curriculum integration can take place and communities of both students and teachers can develop. The conception of clusters has been widely promoted at both federal and state levels: the School-to-Work Opportunities Act requires students to choose 'career majors' no later than the beginning of the tenth grade, and several states have recommended 'curricular paths' or 'focus areas' for all students.

- Occupational high schools and magnet schools emphasise preparation for clusters of related vocations. These include magnet schools developed as mechanisms of racial desegregation, many of which have an occupational focus—in electronics, computers, or business, for example—as well as magnet schools intended to enhance the quality of education. Every student within an occupational school is enrolled in a curriculum incorporating courses related to the magnet's focus, though the number of these courses ranges from the relatively trivial—two or three courses within a four-year sequence, creating a magnet school in name only—to the substantial.

Occupational high schools are similar to academies and clusters except that the scale is larger—the 'cluster' is school-wide. There are obvious advantages for curriculum integration: since all academic teachers are preparing students within a broad occupational area, the incentives to incorporate applications and examples from this particular occupation are strong, and the resources to do so—especially the occupational teachers with whom examples and exercises can be developed—are right at hand. Just as academies do, occupational high schools can also develop cultures supporting cooperation among teachers in the development of curriculum. Occupational high schools are also excellent examples of 'focus schools'—schools with clear missions, organised to pursue their educational goals and solve their own problems, innovative as the need arises, and operating with clear social contracts that establish responsibilities for teachers, students, and parents.

Academies, schools offering clusters or majors, and occupationally oriented high schools vary in their scale, of course, but they share certain distinctive features:

- They all specify related academic and vocational courses for students to take, imposing some coherence on the 'shopping mall high school'.

- They all provide teachers from different disciplines a reason for meeting regularly around curriculum issues, increasing opportunities for cooperation and integration among all disciplines, including those considered academic and vocational.

- The combination of academic and vocational content allows students to plan either for post secondary education, or for employment, or for the combination of employment and further education that has become so prevalent. Students in magnet schools often consciously follow a 'two-track strategy' or 'parallel career planning'. As one senior in a magnet school commented: 'This is my last year, and I'm going to get my cosmetology license. After I get my license, I'll just go to college for business. If one doesn't work out, I'll go to the other'.

- In theory, these practices allow for the integration of occupational content not only with the academic subjects considered to have the most utilitarian value—math, science, and 'communications skills' from English—but also with those subjects that have been entrusted with the moral and political purposes of education: literature, history, and social studies. Indeed, an occupational focus may be a way to engage students in subjects that they generally dislike—for example, by exploring the history of technology and economic development, or the politics surrounding employment and technological change, or the themes of meaning and alienation around work. This approach could also redress an imbalance that dates to the common schools of the 19th century: the preoccupation with preparing a citizenry for democracy has given political issues a central role in the curriculum, while economic issues and debates have never been prominent.

- Most schools with these practices have used broad clusters of related occupations rather than the occupation-specific focus of traditional vocational education—transportation rather than automotive repair, business rather than secretarial and clerical occupations, manufacturing technologies rather than welding, or the broad range of agriculture-related occupations rather than farming. This provides opportunities for exploring a greater variety of academic topics, avoiding the problem of having modestly skilled jobs dictate the teaching of relatively low-level academic content. It allows students to explore a wider variety of careers, and to understand how occupations are related to one

another. And, if broadly structured, clusters can reduce the class, racial, and gender segregation common in high schools, as students from different backgrounds with varied ambitions come together—for example, as health clusters include both would-be doctors and those who aspire to being practical nurses, as an industrial technologies and engineering path includes both future engineers and those who think they will become workers on a local assembly line.

- Students must elect academies or clusters, and in some cities can choose among magnet schools as well. This provides the advantages associated with the choice of a school; but it also requires students to think, early in their high school careers, about their occupational futures. Typically, schools which have adopted academies, clusters, or a magnet theme, have been forced to confront how students make choices, and have usually ended up strengthening counselling or developing more active forms of guidance and counselling.

- The use of occupational clusters provides a natural opportunity for linkages with appropriate post secondary programs, and with employers in those occupational areas in school-to-work programs. These linkages need not seem contrived, as they often are in the comprehensive high school, since academies, clusters, and magnet programs have already focused the curriculum on occupations of interest to post secondary institutions and to particular employers.

In many small-scale efforts at integrating academic and vocational education, the dominant purpose of integration is the incorporation of certain academic or competencies into occupational programs. However, the more substantial efforts I have just described in the United States—and perhaps their counterparts in Australia—represent a considerable transformation of both vocational and academic education, creating a new synthesis by using broadly-defined occupations to provide the context for learning both academic and technical competencies.

The connections to John Dewey

Such schools exemplify the ideal of 'education through occupations' that John Dewey (1916) articulated eighty years ago. Dewey argued that academic and vocational education (or 'learning' versus 'doing', or theory versus application) should not be separated, and that broadly occupational content provides the most appropriate materials for learning: 'Education through occupations consequently combines within itself more of the factors conducive to learning than any other method'. His reasons sound remarkably modern: he argued that teaching should be contextualised ('exercised within activity which puts nature to human use') and should concentrate on the student as a social being rather than an autonomous individual, and that occupations provide the most powerful way of accomplishing both. He also argued that a broadly occupational focus would avoid passive, didactic teaching based on contrived 'school' materials; and he feared that conventional schooling would otherwise narrow the education of those going into lower-skilled occupations. And Dewey consistently criticised overly-specific preparation—'trade training'—since it not only narrowed the scope of education and created inequities for some, but also because it 'defeats its own purpose' as changes in employment take place and narrowly-trained individuals are unable to adjust. This is, of course, the fear that narrowly designed vocational education may undermine economic development and individual mobility instead of furthering them, particularly in periods of change and uncertainty.

It is, of course, too soon to predict what will happen to the various movements for more integrated forms of schooling. In the English-speaking countries, where the academic 'pipeline' is so dominant, there are many obstacles to creating a distinctively different form of schooling. Teachers and administrators have to be prepared in new ways; institutional practices need to change; new forms of assessments must be developed; and parents and employers need to understand the advantages of integrated forms of instruction, as well as being able to identify when inadequate and low-level reforms masquerade as 'education through occupations'. The evidence for the effectiveness of various integrated approaches is still sparse—necessarily so, as with all new reforms. However, the evidence from the United States is generally positive. Moreover, integrated programs provide ways of furthering both economic development and individual development, and of responding to changes in employment without risking obsolescence or undermining the other goals of schooling, in ways that no other reform can provide.

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CHAPTER 7
Youth and unemployment: Educational pathways or tracks that lead nowhere

John Williamson and Angie Marsh

Work as we know it is changing and, as a consequence, so must education. Unfortunately, one of the major aspects of the labour market at present is the high level of youth unemployment. Polices and strategies introduced by governments to counteract the issue of youth unemployment have had a major effect on the development and transition to adulthood and employment of an increasing number of young people now deemed to be at risk.

This chapter focuses on the implications, arising from the implementation of these strategies, for young people reaching school leaving age (completion of Grade 10), particularly those in regional Australia. Consequences of these implications are discussed from the perspective of a study of regional Tasmanian youth, who are eligible to seek employment and enter the workforce and who do not choose to continue with a further two years at school.

Youth unemployment: Is there a problem?

Work is a defining activity; we use it to talk about our present self and to indicate who we might want to be. At the same time, work itself, is being redefined in terms of when and where it is done, how it is done, and even what we mean by work (Matathia & Salzman 1998). In this revolution we can see some of the forces in operation—globalisation, information and communications technology and so on—but we do not know what the world of work will look like in 10 or 20 years. The contours of the future nature of work are not fully clear but at present getting a job and earning a wage is still a very strong signal in indicating a transition from youth to adult and, importantly, from dependence to independence, in our society.

The importance of early work experience is recognised by Sweet (1998) who has described it as the major stepping stone to adult working life for the great majority of Australians since the end of World War 2. Historically and traditionally, particularly in regional Australia, this notion of the individual moving from school to full-time work has been linked very closely to the notion of what it means to be an adult. It has been a kind of cultural necessity. However, now, in a situation where we have seen a predominantly male labour force be replaced by one in which women are rapidly approaching half of the total, and that same workforce move from manufacturing, skilled and manual occupations to service occupations, and where full-time work is no longer accepted as the norm, it is very difficult in some senses, for youth to have the same opportunities as earlier generations.

The nature of the problem

The changes to the nature of work outlined above—the move to more women joining the workplace, the shift from secondary to service industries, the casualisation of jobs and so on—can be seen to result in:

- a significant loss of employment opportunities for youth, and many full-time jobs gradually being replaced by part-time and casual work;
- young people leaving school at the completion of compulsory education being deemed 'at risk' in the transition to full adult status; and, if this is the case,

- of not gaining work; or
- of joining the increasing numbers of disadvantaged youth who find themselves unable to escape from the cycle of insecure, casual, temporary and part-time work (Wooden 1998).

Government's actions

One consequence of broad government macroeconomic policy, particularly the concern to curb inflation, has been the rise in youth unemployment. Marginson (1997) notes that during the period from 1966 to 1980, despite a significant increase in population, there was a decline in the full-time labour market for teenagers, that is, those who typically would have left school as soon as they were able to and sought work. Since the 1970s the unemployment rate for this group has fluctuated around 20 per cent. Australia is not alone in confronting this issue; in the UK, for example, few young people enter the job market at 16 and 17 and upwards of one quarter of the population of working age are dependent on government assistance of one kind or another (Meadows et al. 1996).

Government's recognition of the youth employment issue has resulted in an array of long- and short-term training and employment programs—the focus of which has changed over time. Recent studies both within Australia and overseas have looked at patterns and trends in employment program implementation and delivery. Withers and Batten's (1995) review, a broad examination of Canadian, UK and US literature, dealing with the problems of youth employment opportunities, reveals what they term an 'economic intention' underlying many of the education programs. That is, governments are deliberately linking educational and employment programs through statements about competencies rather than subject matter content and so on. This link between education and employment is not unique to the English speaking countries. For example, the OECD (1996) report of several prominent European countries also underlines the economic orientation of their policies and practices.

Given the Australian tendency to 'policy borrow' or in broad terms to emulate what happens in the UK and, increasingly, the USA, it is not surprising to see the move to competencies, the vocationalising of secondary school curricula, and that education and employment have become more closely integrated. At the present time, however, despite many attempts and efforts, including government labour market initiatives or youth development strategies, the challenge of youth unemployment has not been resolved (Carson & Daube 1994).

Marginson (1997) argues that two broad strategies, to ameliorate these developments and the issue of youth unemployment, have been implemented by Australian federal governments since the 1980s. The first strategy involves changing the locus of government policy for the problem of youth unemployment. This is characterised by a shift in emphasis from the lack of jobs in the workplace to the individual's need to be 'job-ready' as a main determinant of employment. This emphasis, in broad terms, has shifted the onus of responsibility from government to the individual. Government and industry are no longer cast in the position of being primarily responsible for the provision of jobs for youth or for job creation. The shift places the onus of responsibility on the individual to gain further education and to become employable in the new technological age. This focus upon the individual while ignoring the broader socio-politico-economic context is surprising given the central role this cluster of factors play in a modern society. Batten and Russell (1995), for example, contend that the Government's preoccupation

with the individual while forgetting the structural causes of disadvantage such as unemployment, which leads to poverty, only tells half the story. Marginson draws some of the threads in the government's approach to the youth unemployment problem in the following:

> Education programs were seen as the medium for changes in behaviour, and the means for shifting responsibility for job creation from government to the individual, using techniques of self-management and self-improvement acquired in education. However, if education programs were to work in tandem with unemployment and labour market strategy, they had to be vocationalised (1997, p. 171).

The second strategy is a variant of the first. Here there is a similarity in the emphasis—focusing on the individual as a more highly skilled prospective worker—but the mechanism is different. It involves retention of young people in secondary school for two more years, which ensures that young people are better equipped to meet the challenge of the new employment opportunities while, at the same time, relieving the youth job market of many 15- to 18-year-olds and the government of the embarrassing responsibility for an increasing number of unemployed youth and the cost of unemployment benefit. The emphasis is now squarely placed on youth and their lack of readiness for the workforce. The creation of labour market education programs and prolonged retention in schools has led to prolonged dependence and delayed transition to what was formerly seen as full adult status within the society.

In adopting these two broad approaches Australia is following other developed countries down very similar youth employment/education pathways. However, without independently evaluating the policy directions and programs we are, unfortunately, experiencing the same conundrums and we are open to the same criticisms as those reported by the Youth Directorate of the Council of Europe (1998). The EU Council in their assessment of extending the length of time of compulsory education, introducing vocational work-oriented programs, and ostensibly ensuring that the youth of the country do not suffer disadvantage, reported:

> It is unfortunate to note that young peoples' aspirations and expectations are often defined and managed by adults who have become experts in proposing strategies through which they can exclude young people from decision-making processes and social educational benefits while, at the same time, appearing to offer participation and acquisition at all levels on a silver plate (Council of Europe 1998).

What are the possible implications of leaving school before Year 12 for regional youth?

It has been described above how the shift in government presentation in the 1980s of the issue of youth unemployment has moved from one of job availability to one of individual job readiness. At the same time there also has been a strong emphasis on transition education programs in senior secondary schools. In this context, what are the implications, particularly in regional areas, for early school leavers?

The emphasis and focus of the new strategies of inclusion and retention were initiated to ensure that the majority of young people, particularly those who do not wish to continue with higher education, are made ready for transition into the workforce. The emphasis is on learning workplace generic skills and competences, through training programs and work-related education programs, for entrance into the new sophisticated world of

technologically-assisted workplaces. Those young people who leave school at the completion of compulsory education, of whom regional Australia has a higher percentage (Lamb 1997) than their urban peers, are at risk of exclusion and therefore of not fulfilling their aspirations and expectations.

Senior secondary schools as the focus for transition education

There are significant changes occurring in senior secondary schools in terms of curricula, teaching approaches, methods of assessment and links with the world-of-work. However, the apparent emphasis on learning for work—in a narrow economic sense—and the explicit new role of the senior secondary schools to equip young people for transition to adulthood and employment is a fundamental shift in the way we traditionally have viewed the upper secondary years of schooling. The present focus on retention and vocational education in senior secondary schools, following policy changes at the state and federal level of government, means that young people who leave at the end of the compulsory education years receive minimal or no educational preparation for future work. It means that, in practice, they are left to establish their own transition pathways with little or no support. Many of these young people end up on the treadmill of casual, seasonal, part-time, low paid employment and dead-end-jobs, interspersed with months or even years of unemployment. If there are no alternative pathways for them to re-enter training or education, they are the most vulnerable as they have no mechanisms by which to acquire the skills and vocational knowledge needed to enter worthwhile full-time positions.

The push for minimum relevant 'credentials'

Without formal post school vocational training in place, as a mechanism for early school leavers to gain qualifications, they are further disadvantaged when competing with credentialled school leavers. The first recommendation of the Australian Education Council Review Committee's report (see Finn 1991) established some minimum credentials as a means of joining the employment pathway. New formal qualifications, such as trainee certificates, were seen as instruments for access to the workforce and, it was envisaged, by the year 2001 almost all 20 year olds should have attained at least a higher level traineeship (Finn, 1991). Unless carefully monitored and supported by readily accessible pathways this initiative could further disempower young people who might be forced to leave school at the completion of compulsory education. In short, there needs to be proposed and implemented a national training requirement for 16–19 year olds and support for small firms to improve their training programs.

A small percentage of young early school leavers, and those in regional areas to a greater degree than city youths, are more fortunate in gaining worthwhile employment. In the past, in many instances, this reflected the nature of employment in the agricultural industry. This has changed significantly as we see the march of technology in agriculture and the resultant shedding of labour. However, regional employees in the trades areas have a preference for early school leavers as apprentices. The higher wage cost of employing older youths who have no more specific job-related skills than a 16-year-old, has prohibited the employment of older youth. This is changing, however, and the implementation of labour market programs, linked to senior secondary schools' education programs and traineeships, along with senior secondary education qualifications, present a persuasive incentive to employers to select the credentialled applicant. It needs to be ensured that the early school leaver who has work skills and knowledge, which was developed through employment, will not be devalued by certificated courses.

The Tasmanian study

A recent Tasmanian study of early school leavers (Williamson & Marsh 1999) and their attempts to gain employment, highlights many of this chapter's earlier points relating, inter alia, to the emphasis on individual responsibility to be job ready, the needs of early school leavers, the consequences of exclusion from workplace knowledge and vocational education, and training at the critical juncture of transition. As respondents the youth were very aware of major disjunctions in their educational experience and the links it had with the world-of-work. Some of the particular issues they highlighted will be considered below.

Perceived problems with high school curriculum

All of the youth in the Tasmanian study (Williamson & Marsh, 1999), when reflecting on their high school educational careers, often after months of unsuccessful job-seeking experience, reported on the inadequateness of what they did at school to prepare them for the pathway to the world-of-work. Table 1 presents some of these data. It is interesting to note that the large majority (N=63) reported negative comments about the five questions relating to the relevance of school subjects to assist them when they left school and tried to enter the workforce. The respondents interviewed describe an initial but not strong understanding of the importance of good literacy and numeracy skills. They also describe that typically they did not perceive school as relevant and attuned to their aspirations and needs.

Table 1: Respondents' perceptions of appropriateness of school work and of work experience

Responses	Relevance of subject	Interest in subject	Work information	Training information	Work experience	Total answers
Positive	7	7	2	3	14	33
Negative	12	12	18	15	6	63
Missing	1	1		2		4
						100

While the data show that negative responses to four of the five questions are often double the positive responses, the question relating to work experience reverses the order. Here more respondents report they are positive about the work experience opportunity provided to them. However, the respondents also say that work experience was not helpful when they were seeking future employment because it typically was a one-week orientation into the workplace and this did not provide, in their view, an appropriate level of skill or experience. They also recounted that the emphasis in their schools was for further education in a senior secondary school, and while information regarding the availability of education programs or TAFE courses abounded, information relating to assistance with joining the workforce was non-existent.

On the unemployment pathway

For the youth in this study the pathway to work is not easy. Since leaving school nearly a year ago many have begun to feel the restrictions that lack of money presents, namely: to adequately support job searching; boredom; and increasing community rejection. Many report negative experiences in their job searches, including competition from a large number of others for the most menial of jobs, and the sense of isolation and 'aloneness'

after being rejected by employers, who in many instances, it was reported, provide no feedback on the reasons why they were unsuccessful. Increasingly they related experiencing a community view of them as failures. Many saw themselves in a 'no-win' situation; they perceived pressure from the official welfare agencies and an insistence on them gaining work, but with no assistance to help them. They described their experience with case management and job clubs in generally critical terms with phrases such as 'haven't we been through enough?'

However, not all attempts to assist them are perceived negatively. For example, when they take part in short training programs which have an emphasis on gaining generic skills and knowledge in specific areas of work, they at first perceived this as returning to school with all its negative connotations. However, from a rejection phase they related a progressive change of perception along a pathway to acceptance and then enthusiasm for the programs. For many this culminated in an emerging excitement as they learned knowledge and skills they saw as relevant to the workplace. Many reported their confidence grew from the knowledge that they could become proficient in workplace skills and ultimately acquire a recognised certificate in an area of employment. Comments such as: 'Why couldn't they do this at school?' and 'They treat you like adults here' underlined their realisation that learning could be enjoyable and relevant to their personal goals and aspirations.

Individual credentialism: The key to the pathway?

For many of the youth their positive attitudes towards the programs they were completing were, at the same time, cause for some concern. Several spoke about the way the programs separated them from other youth who didn't have the opportunity, for whatever reason to participate. They saw they would need to have a series of programs available if they were to be employable in jobs that were likely to change as described above. In a sense one can see they are beginning to reflect on and grapple with the enunciated approach that sees the individual having the responsibility for getting him/herself job ready.

Clearly in response to the question, 'What is the key to the pathway?', for young people when they have left school, vocational training programs with no waiting period provide the key. The Tasmanian study shows that with the emphasis in senior secondary schools for vocational education and training, workplace introductory programs and industry/education and training programs, leaving school early effectively precludes young people from gaining the knowledge and skills with which to make the transition from the world-of-school to the world-of-work, carrying with it the connotations about adulthood and so on outlined earlier.

Implications for regional sustainability

As discussed earlier, the outcomes of early school leaving in regional Australia are more disadvantageous. With the technologisation of agricultural practices and the resultant redundancies of labour, permanent low-skilled farm work no longer exists. Employment in the trades, traditionally apprenticeship-based, also now tends toward older school leavers with relevant certificated skills. To gain these skills and have any chance of success in their future, young people are forced to leave families and familiar environments, at an age when they need parental guidance and protection, and travel long distances to gain the necessary knowledge and skills to be able to compete for worthwhile full time employment. Therefore, young people growing up in regional communities are becoming increasingly more alienated from the broader community life and its support.

This division also severs the community's links with its young, emerging adult population, creating further fragmentation to the structure of regional communities.

Conclusions

The Tasmanian study on which this chapter is based, like many other studies (see for example, Sweet 1998; Marginson 1997; OECD 1996; Batten & Russell 1995), are suggesting that the issues of youth unemployment, how schools may forge more productive partnerships with business, the nature of relevant curricula, and so on need to be revisited. The simplistic criticism of youth being responsible for their own unemployment because they are not willing to work, is not appropriate. A change in the understanding of the concepts of youth and education and community is needed. The Tasmanian study demonstrates the importance of the integration of community, employment and education agencies and the need for a more holistic approach to education for lifelong learning. Also support mechanisms for young people, not just through the transition from school-to-work phase, are required. Finally, while written in the context of the Northern Hemisphere, the EU Council has some appropriate thoughts on the broad picture, which is also applicable to Tasmania:

> The changing nature of modern youth has far-reaching implications for youth policies. Youth policies today can only be effective if they provide sustained support to individual development rather than seek to mould personalities; facilitate and inform individual choices rather than bluntly discipline; awake for (life-long) learning rather than impose standard knowledge in standard ways and then register educational and labour market failure ... (Council of Europe 1998)

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CHAPTER 8
Using communication and information technologies to empower women in rural communities

Margaret Grace

In Australia, as in other parts of the world, there is considerable interest in many quarters in the potential of new communication and information technologies to contribute significantly to the revitalisation of regional communities. However, much remains to be understood about the social factors which affect the success of innovative technology applications. Research conducted by the Queensland University of Technology (QUT) indicates that gender significantly affects not only access and use of communication and information technologies, but also rural community development. By focusing on rural women's perspectives on communication issues, this research has revealed a need for the development of 'soft' technologies to ensure that both social and economic development occurs in an integrated way in regional, rural and remote communities.

Introduction

Like their urban counterparts, many women in regional, rural and remote parts of Australia are now working the 'double shift' of paid employment as well as home and family management. In the agricultural sector some are working a triple shift of family, farm and off-farm employment. In recent years rural women have campaigned successfully for recognition of the value of their contributions, particularly to agriculture. Their public profile has increased quite dramatically, and they are now being encouraged to take leadership roles in rural industry organisations. It is evident that women are emerging as important players in the management of change in regional, rural and remote communities.

While women in rural and remote Australia are quite diverse in terms of lifestyles, occupations and ethnic backgrounds, they share a strong vested interest in communication issues and many commonalities as communicators. Their interest in communication derives from their diverse occupational and community interests, and from common concerns with family and kinship maintenance. Rural women still typically assume a major responsibility for the care of husbands, children and the elderly, and for the education of their children. They are therefore especially concerned with health and education services both as consumers and as providers.

For such women, the availability of reliable telecommunications is a vital issue. The more remote they are, the more critical this issue becomes. Paradoxically, those who have the most need, have the least access.

Using email in participant research

This paper draws on two recent participative research projects, which focused specifically on rural women's use of communication technologies. Researchers at the Queensland University of Technology conducted the projects. Findings are reported in more detail in Grace et al. (1999) and Grace, Lundin and Daws (1996).

The use of electronic mail which this paper reports was embedded in the action research methodology of the second (1996–97) project which was funded by an Australian Research Council (ARC) collaborative research grant. It involved the participation of over 200 women from various parts of Queensland and collaboration with seven 'Industry Partners'. The partners included several State government departments, Telstra Corporation and Pegasus Networks. This structure enabled the project to create links between the rural participants and the industry partners and contributed greatly to its effectiveness.

The project's aims included enhancing rural women's access to communication and information technologies, and assessing the impact of women's use of such technologies on their participation in small business development, community development, research, consultation, and planning.

The participant methodology included the conduct of consultative and awareness-raising workshops in each year of the project in ten widely separated locations in Queensland. At each location, we encouraged women to try using electronic mail as part of their participation in the project. The term *wechat*, short for 'women's electronic chat' was devised to describe this part of the project. By early in 1997 the group communicating regularly by email comprised five members of the research team, three or four women from the industry partners, and about 15 women from various parts of rural and remote Queensland.

From March 1997 onwards the email communication was expanded with the establishment on the Pegasus Networks server of a mailing list called *welink*, which had the stated intention of linking urban and rural women. A vibrant online community including women in other Australian States and in other countries rapidly developed. By July 1997 there were already over 90 subscribers and postings reached 100 messages per week. Well over half of the participants were from rural and remote locations (Grace et al. 1999).

Welink soon developed a life of its own with a strong sense of community and a high degree of sense of ownership by the participants, who successfully urged QUT to continue to operate the list beyond the length of the project. Women who have participated in *welink*, have set up at least two other electronic mailing lists for rural women, using *welink* as a model.

The research team has tried to identify the reasons for the success of these online initiatives. The accessibility of electronic mail, which is a relatively low-tech facility, and its cost effectiveness in comparison with the telephone for rural people, are obvious factors. It is also clear that the online communication is meeting a very real need for social interaction with other women for many women in rural and remote Queensland, who can be socially isolated not only by distance but also by the restricting aspects of rural community cultures. The fact that the use of email was embedded in a research methodology, which incorporated community development processes, is another contributing factor.

Gender is also an important factor. The communication has developed in ways which reflect women's distinctive communicative styles and with which they feel comfortable. The communication style has been conversational rather than focused on information exchange or debate. Most messages cover more than one topic, and frequently incorporate

humour and storytelling. Reports of daily doings are interwoven with the exchange of information and opinion about a wide range of topics including the weather, health matters, family matters, recreational interests and local, national, and international events. Personal problems are shared and supportive responses are received. The friendly atmosphere, which the women have created on both *wechat* and *welink*, reflects the high value they place on connectivity. This is a feature of women's communication patterns noted by feminist scholars (see, for example, the work of sociolinguist Deborah Tannen 1992).

Impacts of participation in *wechat* and *welink*

Positive impacts on individual participants, which have been recorded by the research team, include:

- Better access to information.
- Reduced social isolation resulting in better stress management.
- Increased confidence from gaining competency in using the technologies and accessing a wider range of information and opinion.
- The creation of employment and small business opportunities. Examples include a woman who teleworks for the Office of Rural Communities from a remote sheep station, and a woman who set up her own small business in basic computer training and home support.
- Empowerment. Needing their voices can be heard and understood is a burning issue for many people in rural and remote Australia. The regular online communication enabled information from women in 'the bush' to reach women in the city who were strategically placed, for example, in tertiary education institutions and the public service.

Impacts at local community or regional level include:

- Raised awareness about communications issues and other issues affecting rural communities.
- The facilitation of access to funding for community projects.
- Enhanced leadership capacity and public profile of rural women.

Actual and potential application of communication and information technologies by women in regional, rural and remote communities

The QUT research indicates that as they gain access to email and the Internet, women in rural, regional and remote communities will use information technology in combination with a range of other communication technologies they already use such as the telephone, facsimile transfer, UHF and VHF radio and audio and videoconferencing. The following are some of the contexts in which such women are likely to apply these technologies.

Family and kinship maintenance

Those women who have participated in the online conversations created by our research projects are already using email to communicate with distant family members, including children who are at boarding schools and universities.

Networking

Computer mediated communication is already being used to overcome the tyranny of distance facing regional, state-wide and national rural women's organisations. For example, email can enable more frequent, faster, less costly communication between dispersed committee members and can facilitate the networking of rural women's groups and organisations nationally and internationally. This has already occurred for the Queensland Rural Women's Network which, as a result of its members' participation in the QUT research, readily adopted email for regular communication between its widely dispersed management committee, used *welink* for widespread networking, and then secured a large grant from the Rural Telecommunications Infrastructure Fund (RTIF) for further applications and training.

Health

Both professional health workers and women who are caring for their own and their families' health are using the Internet to access health and safety information. Some isolated women are using the Internet and email to access support networks for sufferers of particular conditions or disabilities and their carers, and there is potential to create electronic networks which will enhance professional support of isolated rural health workers.

Education

The applications of advanced communication and information technology in distance education and open learning are well known. These applications apply at all levels, from primary schooling through to advanced postgraduate study. Women in rural and remote areas are involved with the progressive introduction of information technology as education professionals, as students and as parents, especially those who are home tutors for pupils of the schools of distance education.

Agriculture

In the past decade significant changes have taken place in the economics of family farming which have resulted in many women increasing their involvement in both managerial and manual aspects of farm work. Our research suggests that on family farms, it is often the female partner who has the better keyboard and clerical skills and the greater interest in information technology. The farming and grazing women who attended our workshops were resourceful, caring, and deeply committed to their husbands, families, and local communities. Such women are a precious and strategically significant resource for Queensland agriculture. Many of these women can see the potential for new technologies to improve both their efficiency as farmers and their quality of life, and they are prepared to learn.

Small business development

According to a report of the Tasmanian Women's Consultative Council (1996), women comprise nearly one third of small business operators in Australia. Other research (for example, Still & Chia 1995) indicates that the survival rate of small businesses operated by women is higher than that of businesses operated by men, and that if such trends continue, women will eventually outnumber men in small business, both as proprietors and employees.

Communication and information technologies offer the following potential strategic opportunities for women in business:

- enhanced access to relevant information, training and business services;
- access to resources such as World Wide Web sites;
- use of the World Wide Web as a stimulus for creative ideas;
- diversification and pluriactivity of primary producers through women's small business and teleworking activities;
- facilitation of cooperative action by primary producers to engage in value adding of their products, including beef and wool, and to create collaborative commodity data bases and access new markets;
- enhanced market access through the commercial aspects of the World Wide Web, for niche marketing of agricultural products, arts and crafts products, and farm tourism;
- opportunities for small business development in information industry services and training provision;
- opportunities for teleworking both through networks of individuals and through
- telecentres;
- opportunities to be involved in the development of social infrastructure to support teleworking such as marketing facilities, including the development of employer and client databases;
- enhanced business and professional networking for women through the creation of online networks.

There is potential for projects which would aim to promote women's small business enterprise by providing training in information technology and creating online networks. Networks of geographically dispersed women who were actual or potential small business proprietors could be formed, using a community development model which would include some face-to-face workshopping and basic training, supplemented by teleconferences and frequent online communication.

Implications for regional sustainability

There is much more to the use of communication and information technology for rural revitalisation than providing the technical infrastructure and assuming that the community will take advantage of it. In *Engines of Empowerment*, an insightful analysis of the applications of information technology for the creation of healthy communities in the United States, Milio (1996) argues that more attention should be given to the development of accompanying social infrastructure or 'soft' technologies.

Part of the social infrastructure is the consideration of social justice issues. To ensure equitable access, the effect of factors such as gender, ethnicity, age and socioeconomic circumstances must be addressed. It has been argued (Spender 1996) that women have been largely excluded from the design and development of information technology, and are at risk of being disadvantaged as users. The QUT action research project specifically addressed this issue by providing female-friendly, awareness-raising processes and by supporting women to gain access. Many rural women were then quick to adopt the technology and apply it in innovative ways. This has important implications for rural community development and regional sustainability.

Women also have valuable perspectives and skills to contribute to the development of the social infrastructure which will ensure that technology is put to the service of community. The occupations and interests of rural women tend to transcend conventional social science categories and their daily lives exhibit a high degree of integration of economic and social activity and concerns. Women therefore tend to develop the more holistic perspectives, which are necessary for the management of change, as rural communities move into the 21st century.

In summary, the particular significance of women as users of communication technologies for rural community development lies in:

- the diversity of their paid and unpaid activities, interests and responsibilities;
- changes in women's social roles, including their greater participation and leadership in paid employment, agricultural management, community development, and public life;
- women's distinct communicative capacities and styles, and
- women's capacity to integrate social and economic issues.

Conclusion

The QUT action research project was successful in creating a vibrant online community which facilitates communication among women in rural and remote parts of Australia and which links them with urban women and women in other countries. This occurred because the electronic communication was embedded in a research project methodology characterised by community development processes, and because it addressed a real need, the social isolation of women in rural and remote situations. Women's distinctive communicative styles also contributed to the creation of this virtual community.

One of the most important outcomes of the online communication has been the empowerment of the participants. This empowerment derives from the supportive nature of the communication between the women; and the links forged between women in regional, rural and remote communities and women who are strategically placed in universities, government and industry.

By focusing on rural women's perspectives, which integrate economic and social issues, the QUT research has revealed the need for 'soft' technologies or social infrastructure to be developed in association with 'hard' infrastructure. The initiation of community development processes, including the flexible delivery of appropriate training in information technology, were identified as crucial elements of such social infrastructure.

Through their diverse social and productive roles, their communication skills, and their holistic perspectives, women are well equipped to take leading roles as innovators and managers of change. Their enhanced access to the new communication and information technologies will be crucial to the realisation of this potential. Gender is thus a significant factor in the capacity of communication and information technologies to stimulate rural and regional community development.

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CHAPTER 9
Working smarter not harder: Regional disability-based organisations.

Harvey Griggs

Disability-based organisations in general have traditionally provided care, support, work, and occupations for people with disabilities, in a system supported by subsidies from government and charity from the community. This has led to organisations in the disability sector heavily depending on outside help such as cash and in-kind donations; volunteer workers and helpers; and 'favourable' treatment and concessions from suppliers and customers, for both day to day operations and long-term growth. Such organisations are facing growing economic pressures, particularly in regional areas, as well as the changing nature of the disability industry, as it struggles to provide the traditional environment for its clients.

Managers and boards of management of many disability-based organisations have decided that the way to manage the change is to be more responsible for their own destiny and to base their operations on commercially viable businesses. The management base for this new paradigm needs to be strengthened, as evidenced by a recent profile of northern and central Victorian non-government disability sector managers. This base must be broader and deeper than is currently the case, encompassing the full spectrum of management functions from a business as well as a social perspective.

Introduction

For most Australians, but particularly the employed, the last 15 years or so must seem to have been a continuous escalation of dramatic changes. There have been changes to industry structures incorporating a lowering of trade barriers and acceleration of the internationalisation of markets; economic changes incorporating recession and unemployment, volatile interest and currency rates, and production and information technology 'revolutions' incorporating organisations changing shape to become leaner, faster, and more flexible. And all this is quite apart from the vast array of environmental challenges and issues that have emerged.

These changes have not been quarantined to urban Australians. In fact, it is arguable that these changes have had a comparatively greater deleterious impact on regional Australians and the communities in which they live, due to the comparatively fewer employment options for people living and working in those areas, than urban Australians. Further discussion of the specific nature and degree of the impact has been included elsewhere in this book and will not be repeated here. Suffice to say that regional Australia is in crisis.

Perhaps it is *because* of this impact however, amongst other reasons, that the Federal government has formulated a Regional Australia Strategy. In this strategy, the 1998/99 objective for regional Australia is to provide the economic, environmental and social infrastructure necessary for Australia's regions to realise their potential, and the Federal government has taken a broad range of policy and program initiatives across all its portfolios to achieve its aim.

It is pleasing to see that many of these initiatives go further than merely looking at financial or economic responsibilities, and focus on important social aspects, including those relating to people with disabilities. It is this aspect of people with disabilities, the

organisations that support them, and particularly the management of those organisations, that will be the focus of this chapter.

Challenges for the disability sector

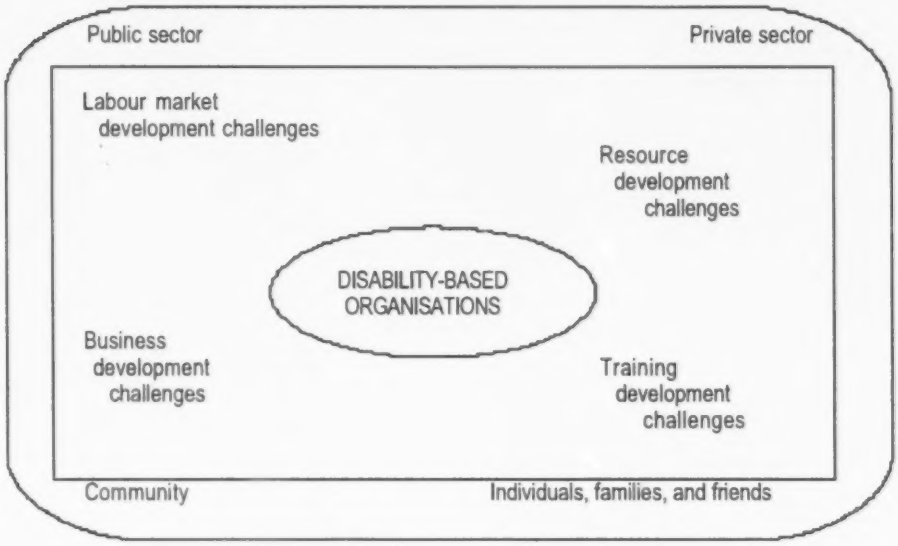
The loss of population from regional areas often leaves behind the most disadvantaged—the aged, the sick, and the disabled, and this in communities which are undergoing the all too familiar accompanying downward spiral of regional infrastructure. The disability infrastructure that is left has another set of challenges to overcome, quite apart from the generic change issues already mentioned above. These key challenges for disability agencies and their managers in Victoria and Tasmania have been:

- Changes in policy directions of State government including:
  - Purchaser-provider relationship with funded agencies
  - Compulsory competitive tendering (CCT)
  - New service delivery models
  - An emphasis on client-driven service systems
  - A demand for specific output measures
- Moving towards unit-based funding
- Continued process of deinstitutionalisation
- Reprofiling and restructuring of the sector
- An emphasis on productivity
- Shifts in the industrial relations framework
- The changing role of committees of management
- Growing sophistication of service users and other key stakeholders
- Growing importance placed on quality measures
- Growing importance of change management skills

(Adapted from Non Government Disability Training Unit (NDTU) 1996)

The key stakeholders and these broad themes are illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Challenges and stakeholders for the disability sector



It is clear that, in the face of the generic and specific challenges referred to above, the human service-driven, self-help philosophy, which started many disability-based organisations, must drive the change to find new ways to provide for individual growth and fulfilment. At the same time, commercial and economic security to cater for the long-term future of those organisations must be pursued by those responsible.

Challenges for management

Many management teams and their boards or committees in the disability sector have, encouraged by their sponsors who are predominantly governments at various levels, decided that the way to manage these sector challenges is to be more responsible for their own organisation's destiny, and to base their operations on commercially viable businesses and/or management practices. Certainly the government dollar is becoming harder to obtain and sustain, and now comes with more stringent accountability and performance standards, and with market-driven policies. But the key reason why the commercial management approach is not only preferred but required, is that the emphasis has changed from a purely internal one (on the client with a disability) to incorporating an external focus—on the customers and stakeholders. Governments at all levels have always had an interest in determining if the community has access to an appropriate level of publicly-funded services. Measuring the extent to which this has been achieved is increasingly focusing on the organisational outputs and outcomes by which efficiency and effectiveness are measured.

The degree to which management teams and their boards and committees will be successful in their endeavours will, to a very large degree, depend on the calibre of the people involved. There seems to be a general consensus that education and training is a major contributor to enhanced performance at individual (e.g. Bartel 1994; Guzzo, Jette & Katzell 1985), organisational (Ichniowski et al. 1995; World Bank 1995; Holzer et al.

1993), and national (e.g. Clare & Johnson 1993; Norris 1993; Hicks 1987; Martin Report 1964) levels. Perhaps Porter (1990, p. 628) best summed up the situation when he said that, 'Education and training constitute perhaps the single greatest long-term leverage point available to all levels of government in upgrading industry.'

In the context of the disability sector, government is the most significant stakeholder in terms of finance, and in addition to or perhaps as a consequence of this, is at the forefront of education and training and sector reforms aimed at improving client-driven outcomes. The 'lever' for these outcomes is seen as being management.

In addition to the generic education and training studies referred to above, a number of other, wider studies concerned the relationships between managerial characteristics and organisational performance (e.g. Norburn & Birley 1988; Virnay & Tushman 1986; Child 1974). These broader studies take the view that the three constructs of planning/strategy, top management characteristics (specifically education and training), and organisational performance are all-necessary in understanding the process by which top management influences organisational outcomes. The characteristics of top management do not, however, have an independent effect on organisational performance. Rather, it is the institutionalisation of these characteristics into the planning processes of organisations that has the greatest impact on performance, all other things being equal.

From a management education perspective, the Ralph Report (1982) clearly stated that managerial effectiveness was enhanced by high-quality management education, thereby enhancing organisational performance.

This chapter will briefly examine the above issues as they relate to a pilot project conducted which involved 53 managers of provincial and rural Victorian disability-based organisations. This exploratory study generally identified key criteria of the managers, and in particular, sought to gain an understanding of the general extent of management education and training issues as well as developing a structure for data gathering in later phases of the research project.

The management profile

The management workforce profile was developed as a descriptive study. Developing the profile consisted of discussions, workshops, and cluster group meetings with 53 managers and supervisors of 27 disability-based organisations located in central and northern Victoria who were gathered together for an industry training project. The area sample was representative of agencies in the region as it included managers from most of the agencies located there.

The primary goals of undertaking this exploratory profiling were:

1. To gain an appreciation of the general extent of management education and training and issues in the top management team.
2. To prepare part of a draft questionnaire for later use in data gathering from a wider sample.

The participants represented agencies whose workforces ranged in size up to 100 employees, but did not include any agencies from the Melbourne metropolitan area. Some agencies were represented by more than one manager, and managers came from different functional areas in agencies.

Findings

Based on the sample, the profile showed that the typical manager in the non-government disability sector is: employed by an organisation with less than 30 staff; an Australian born female aged between 30–49 who has worked in the disability sector for between one to ten years, most of which have been as a manager; post-secondary qualified with a tertiary or postgraduate qualification; not formally management-trained or qualified, and does not belong to a member of a professional management association (see Appendix 1).

Age

The single largest group of managers (47 per cent) was the 'baby-boomers' i.e. Managers aged between 40–49. These managers were spread uniformly amongst different-sized agencies, although slightly higher proportions than average were located in rural areas (52 per cent compared to the overall average of 47 per cent). The second largest group of managers were those aged between 30–39 (28 per cent), and these managers were predominantly employed by agencies in provincial cities (41 per cent compared to the overall average of 28 per cent), and in agencies with workforces of between 11–30 people (35 per cent compared to the overall average of 28 per cent).

Gender

Three-quarters (74 per cent) of managers were women, and they were equally represented across the range of agency sizes, as were the males. Males were represented proportionately higher in provincial cities (36 per cent compared to the overall average of 26 per cent), while females were represented proportionately lower in provincial cities (64 per cent compared to the overall average of 74 per cent).

Country of origin

Almost 80 per cent of managers originated in Australia and a slightly higher proportion than average were located in smaller agencies (87 per cent compared to the overall average of 79 per cent). The only other significant grouping was that from the United Kingdom which represented 13 per cent of the sample. These managers were more often found in larger agencies (19 per cent compared to the overall average of 13 per cent), although there was no distinction between rural or provincial areas.

Disability-based employment

Two-thirds of managers (68 per cent) in the sample reported having worked in the disability sector for up to ten years, with 15 per cent having spent more than 15 years. Almost half (47 per cent as compared to the average of 40 per cent) the managers in smaller agencies had sector experience of between 1–5 years, and the largest group (42 per cent) of managers with the same level of experience were located in rural areas.

Managerial experience

Almost three-quarters (72 per cent) of managers had overall managerial experience of up to ten years, and almost half (49 per cent) of those surveyed had up to five years. There did not appear to be any significant differences between the length of managerial experience of managers employed in either the different-sized agencies, or agencies in rural or provincial areas, although 57 per cent of managers in larger agencies had more than five years' managerial experience as compared to 47 per cent for medium and smaller agencies.

Educational history

More than half (51 per cent) of all managers had undergraduate or postgraduate qualifications; with a higher proportion than average for postgraduates (40 per cent compared to the overall average of 30 per cent) being located in smaller agencies. A significantly higher proportion (45 per cent compared to the overall average of 30 per cent) of managers in provincial cities possessed postgraduate qualifications, and a significantly higher proportion (32 per cent compared to the overall average of 23 per cent) of managers in rural areas possessed only secondary qualifications.

Management education background

Over half (57 per cent) of all managers in the sample did not have any formal management qualification. This situation was slightly better in provincial cities where 50 per cent of managers possessed either tertiary or postgraduate management qualifications as compared to 39 per cent of managers in rural areas. Double (27 per cent as compared to 13 per cent) the percentage of managers in provincial cities possessed tertiary (non-degree) management qualifications as compared to their rural counterparts, while the reverse was the case with postgraduate management qualifications (five per cent as compared to ten per cent). Interestingly, the highest proportion of managers with postgraduate management qualifications came from agencies with a workforce of between 1–10 people (13 per cent compared to the overall average of eight per cent).

Professional management associations

There was a wide array of memberships cited by participants, and the 'management-relatedness' was difficult to determine in some cases. The only organisation listed by more than one manager was the Australian Institute of Management (four respondents). Over three-quarters of managers (77 per cent) did not belong to any professional management association, and this was exaggerated in rural areas (84 per cent compared to the overall average of 77 per cent). Just over two thirds (68 per cent) of provincial city managers did not belong to any professional management association. Eighteen per cent (compared to the average of 11 per cent) of provincial city managers belonged to 'other' associations. The larger agencies showed a higher proportion than average of relevant memberships, particularly the Australian Institute Management.

Discussion of profile

The findings of this preliminary, exploratory study, although tentative, reveal a managerial landscape with many interesting features. Preliminary chi-square tests do not reveal any statistically significant differences at .05 level of significance. However, some of the findings are intuitive and support previous research. For example, the generally low levels of management-related qualifications and professional management association memberships reflect the kinds of concerns enunciated in the Karpin Report (1995) which considered that one of the keys to quality management in the Australian workforce generally was the provision of quality management training.

Also, the predominance of women found in this study is consistent with the preponderance of women in the social and community services sector of 87 per cent as reported in the 1994 Industry Training Plan of the Social and Community Services Industry Training Board (The Resolutions Group 1996).

Not only should such quality management training be provided however, but it must also

be taken up by managers in the sector. Further research is required to determine whether or not those managers who possess management-related qualifications and/or professional management association memberships undertook such study or joined the association(s) prior to their employment in the sector.

In any event, the concerns about the management base identified by organisations in the sector seem well founded.

Of interest also is the preponderance of males in provincial cities and women in rural areas. Further research is required to determine the reasons for this phenomenon, and for the apparent progression from commencing employment in the sector in rural areas, moving to provincial cities for mid-career experiences (30–40 years of age), and then returning to rural agencies.

There is a clearly identified need for management education and training in rural agencies where 61 per cent of managers do not possess any management qualification at all. It is in such areas (two thirds of the sample), where the bulk of smaller and medium-sized agencies are located, that managers are required to be competent across a wide range of conceptual and technical areas. It is also in such areas where the provision of suitable training opportunities and the acquisition of such skills are problematic.

The fact that the study was comprised of managers from 27 agencies in a geographical area devoid of any really large agencies (those with a workforce of over 100), and excluded agencies from the Melbourne metropolitan area (where some two thirds of agencies in Victoria are located) means that the generalisability of the results to the wider Victorian population of some 150 agencies administered by the Non-Government Disability Training Unit may not be valid. Further research will be conducted during 1998/99 involving all Victorian and all Tasmanian agencies in the same categories.

Implications for regional sustainability

The challenge for stakeholders, the sector, and the organisations themselves is somewhat akin to that facing the Federal government in relation to attracting suitably qualified medical practitioners to regional Australia. Attracting, retaining, and encouraging management of regional disability-based organisations to undertake suitable education and training will enhance the client-driven outcomes of such organisations, and ensure the provision of quality services to those disadvantaged people left behind. There is no shortage of community-minded people willing to serve the cause of disabled people in regional Australia. Such people are quite passionate about the cause, and the need to retain an adequate level of disability-based infrastructure. Also, there is no shortage of management training programs. However, there needs to be more choice available for managers in relation to the context of available courses, i.e. there are many generic management courses offered by training providers both public and private, but few courses offered by such providers which specifically provide for the business/social blend for management in the disability sector. And even fewer provide for flexible deliveries so those regional managers are able to suitably access such courses.

What is required is communication—managers do not always know what management training is available, and even when they do, are not always able to access relevant training. Many agencies, particularly in Victoria and including regional areas, have already had Agency Training Plans for management prepared. The training needs of management have already been identified. Now is the time for governments and peak sector bodies to

ramp up the communication process, and perhaps where appropriate, to prompt and assist agencies and clusters of agencies to become registered training providers and develop suitable programs of their own. Adequate levels of funding must be made available to facilitate the process.

In the long term, the investments that governments make in developing regional management training and education and peak sector bodies, will enhance the regional disability infrastructure, and encourage agency self-sufficiency.

Conclusion

In the face of many generic, regional, and industry-specific challenges, managers of disability-based organisations are reacting by introducing commercial practices and techniques into their operating systems. There is considerable evidence that education and training enhances performance at individual, organisational, and national levels. In relation to individuals, this education and training is institutionalised into the planning processes of organisations and has the greatest impact on performance. The low levels of management education and training in rural areas are a worrying indicator of organisational performance in those areas.

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Appendix 1

Management Association		Workforce size				
		1–10	*11–30*	*31–100*	*over 100*	*Total*
None	freq. dist.	12	14	15	0	41
	per cent	80%	82%	71%	0%	77%
AIM	freq. dist.	1	0	3	0	4
	per cent	7%	0%	14%	0%	8%
AHRI	freq. dist.	0	0	1	0	1
	per cent	0%	0%	5%	0%	2%
AISA	freq. dist.	0	0	1	0	1
	per cent	0%	0%	5%	0%	2%
Other	freq. dist.	2	3	1	0	6
	per cent	13%	18%	5%	0%	11%
Total frequency distribution		15	17	21	0	53
Total per cent		100%	100%	100%	0%	100%
Management Association		*Location*				
		Rural	*Prov. City*	*Melbourne*	*Other*	*Total*
None	freq. dist.	26	15	0	0	41
	per cent	84%	68%	0%	0%	77%
AIM	freq. dist.	2	2	0	0	4
	per cent	6%	9%	0%	0%	8%
AHRI	freq. dist.	1	0	0	0	1
	per cent	3%	0%	0%	0%	2%
AISA	freq. dist.	0	1	0	0	1
	per cent	0%	5%	0%	0%	2%
Other	freq. dist.	2	4	0	0	6
	per cent	6%	18%	0%	0%	11%
Total frequency distribution		31	22	0	0	53
Total per cent		100%	100%	0%	0%	100%

CHAPTER 10
Support networks and trust: How social capital facilitates learning outcomes for small businesses

Sue Kilpatrick and Rowena Bell

The chapter examines a learning community of farm businesses (a community-of-practice rather than a geographic community). It traces the way in which the community deliberately structures its activities so as to develop and accumulate social capital. The chapter also examines the outcomes of the use of social capital in learning processes of members. Much of the literature on social capital focuses on trust as the central element (Cox 1995; Fukuyama 1995; Putnam 1993). The farmer learning community develops a high level of trust among its members, however trust is not the most important element in bringing about and sustaining changes. The support network created by the community is the single most important factor in facilitating the changes, which the members make to their business management practice. It is argued that trust is a by-product of getting to know other members of the community and developing shared values. A strong and effective support network for change is created as a result of knowing others' strengths and weaknesses and valuing a climate of openness in which members are able to challenge others and be challenged.

Introduction

Social capital (networks, values, trust and commitment) facilitates learning and change in communities by oiling the processes of accessing and acquiring new knowledge, skills and values. The literature on social capital argues that high levels of social capital lead to strong economic performance (Putnam 1993). Development and maintenance of a strong economy requires an ability and willingness to adapt in the light of external pressures and opportunities. This in turn requires businesses to make appropriate and successful changes to their practices. This chapter considers how social capital is used by a group of small businesses as they make changes, which improve business outcomes.

Learning, change and economic outcomes

There is considerable interest in ways in which individuals, enterprises, industries, communities and society as a whole can be encouraged to be responsive and adaptable in the face of a wide range of opportunities and threats. Government is interested in how individuals and communities can be resilient in the face of economic threats such as the loss of a major employer and how industries can respond to opportunities and threats. Businesses of all sizes are urged to take advantage of opportunities arising from changes in domestic and global markets.

Adaption and change are learning processes during which people, individually and as groups (including organisations and communities), develop new knowledge, skills and values. The role of formalised learning in the form of education and training in those functions which require adaption to change is well established (Kilpatrick 1996; Bartel & Lichtenberg 1987).

Work on the learning society emphasises the link between learning and responsiveness to change (Young 1995). The literature on learning organisations recognises that organisations adapt and grow through learning (Senge 1993). Change is a cumulative process which builds on existing knowledge and practices through interactive learning. Organisations which adapt and change as a result of interactive learning activities are learning organisations.

Social capital, learning and change

Economics explains how goods and services are produced by enterprises using physical capital and human capital. Recent work suggests that human capital works more effectively in conjunction with social capital, where social capital is the networks, norms or values and trust or commitment that are present in a group, community or society (Putnam 1993; Coleman 1988). Better outcomes result when people use their knowledge and skills along with the knowledge and skills of others, through interactions which use networks, shared values and the commitment of others to the group. Putman's (1993) study of Italy found that regions with a large number of small firms which engaged in a mix of competition and cooperation, where there was a high level of horizontal integration, were economically successful. The flexibility that came from high horizontal and low vertical integration in the economy allowed the firms and their regions to succeed in a fast-moving economic world.

Small farm businesses, learning and change

In this chapter we examine a group of farm businesses who learn together with the objective of making changes in their businesses. We explore whether a social capital framework can help explain the processes whereby their learning results in changes in their businesses.

Individual farms have small workforces, with consequently limited opportunities for interactive learning within the 'organisation'. Small family farm businesses, with single or dual operators comprise 74 per cent of all Australian farm businesses. They are less likely to make changes to farming practices than those with larger management teams (Kilpatrick 1996). The farm businesses which are the subject of this study seek interactive learning opportunities outside the business. The changes which they make are an outcome of both the knowledge and skills within an individual business and the use of the knowledge and skills of others.

Groups and support

The knowledge and skills of other farm businesses are accessed through an informal group support network, which is developed through participation in structured group activities. There is a large body of literature about how effective groups are created (e.g. Corey & Corey 1997. This literature concentrates on the stages of group development, and the characteristics that lead to effective groups, such as cohesion, atmosphere, leadership, rules and procedures and group norms, and on interventions that improve group effectiveness in achieving group goals. There is literature about 'in-group' support of members. There is little literature which discusses how formal groups influence or support their members beyond or outside the group structure.

Theories of group development divide the behaviour of groups over time into between three and six phases. The first phase is 'hesitation and testing' or 'forming'. Middle phases are labelled 'conflict and frustration', 'growth of security and autonomy' and 'confrontation' or 'storming', 'norming' and 'performing'. The final phase is called 'separation' or 'resolution

and recycling'. Interpersonal trust has been identified as central to the success of group processes. The phases of group development can be observed in the farm business group in this study.

The achievement of individual goals such as increased profitability, which is a goal of the farm business group that is the subject of this chapter, usually require a change to practice or behaviour. Support appears to play an important role in the decision to change, in implementing change and in continuing with a new practice once implemented (Kilpatrick 1996; Rogers 1995). Models of decision making such as the innovation-diffusion model as described by Rogers (1995) include a final stage which involves support of others. Yet there is a relatively small amount of literature on groups as support networks for changes made by individual members, for the purpose of achieving individual goals.

Methodology

This chapter examines some of the findings from the study of a group of farm business managers who are members of Executive Link™, a 'learning community' which is described below. We observed an Executive Link™ meeting, and conducted a focus group with 15 volunteers. Following the meeting, we developed a semi-structured interview questionnaire which we administered to nine volunteer members at their businesses. The researchers were particularly interested in examining the way group members could develop and maintain a 'healthy' group and how this assisted individuals in the group to make changes in their lives and their businesses.

What is Executive Link™?

Executive Link™ consists of farm businesses which meet for regular nonformal education and training in several Chapters in eastern Australia. Each Chapter consists of a number of Boards made up of around six member farm businesses and their owner/managers. The Boards provide management advice to their members, who are free to accept or reject that advice.

Members must complete a prerequisite farm management training course. Each meeting has an experiential component based on members' workplace (business) situations, and a training component, usually featuring an external trainer or facilitator. In the first component, farm businesses in each Board share information about the physical and financial performance of their businesses with the intention of learning how to better manage their businesses. Training topics in the second component range widely from self development topics such as positive thinking to management topics such as getting the most out of financial statements.

Most members of Executive Link™, like the majority of Australian farm businesses, are husband and wife partnerships, although multi-generation farm businesses are represented. Typically, all members of the businesses management team attend Executive Link™ meetings. Being a member of Executive Link™ demands being open to change, and requires a demonstrated commitment to training (the prerequisite course). From earlier work on change and training in farm businesses (Kilpatrick 1996) it is safe to say that the members of Executive Link™ are not typical of Australian farm businesses.

Building support networks

Executive Link™ meetings are structured so as to facilitate learning. The farm management consultants who facilitate the meetings actively seek out and incorporate good practice in

adult learning and techniques for working in groups. A major aim of Executive Link™ is to assist its members to make changes in their businesses. Here we focus on the way in which the Boards build support networks which facilitate change, but first we look briefly at the changes made by member businesses.

Whilst in this chapter we emphasise the role of support and advice which members provide to each other, it must be made clear that advice and information from outside the Board and outside Executive Link™ are also important to the success of the members' businesses. Executive Link™ training sessions and the contributions of the facilitators introduce outside ideas into Executive Link™. These external inputs influence the changes which Executive Link™ members make to their businesses.

Business changes

The business owners attribute the changes they have made to physical and financial management to their participation in Executive Link™. The changes, which can be summarised as better use of inputs, have contributed to an average 60 per cent increase in business profitability for all continuing member businesses. A few businesses have moved out of the industry after assessing their situations and their likelihood of medium- to long-term viability.

The business managers use tools, such as benchmarking, and other knowledge gained from Executive Link™, when making what are often major changes to the way they run their businesses. However, it is the support of fellow members which 'oils' the process of learning and implementing new practices, and which is vital in ensuring that major changes are made. This member sums up the advantage of the support of the group:

> There are so many farmers out there doing lots of work and putting in lots of effort, and just getting nowhere. And with a small amount of training and focussing, and a bit of back up, and a bit of support... it just works so beautifully. [Executive Link™ member 1]

The following quote is from one of a group of Executive Link™ members who helped a fellow member make decisions about a major change in direction for the business. They describe the experience as positive for the group as well as for the member who was helped:

> There was tremendous commitment to... go to that [Board member's] place... We went on a Saturday and most of us were in the middle of shearing... I had to get people to do my work for me and the other members of the Board were in the same boat... We just had to do it, and it worked really well and we all gained from it. [Executive Link™ member 4]

There are processes and stages that the groups go through before they become effective support networks. At Executive Link™, the training sessions, structure, rules and procedures for the residential meetings are deliberately designed to create effective groups. The processes are described in our earlier paper (Kilpatrick et al. 1999). There are outcomes of participation in the Executive Link™ for the members as individuals in terms of self-confidence and development of interpersonal communication skills, and outcomes for the Boards which allow them to function as a support network for their members.

A capacity to provide support

The process of building a capacity to operate as a support network emerges from the data. The structure, procedures and rules foster a climate in which all ideas are valued: one member commented that there is no such thing as a stupid question, or a stupid idea. Whilst the structure of Executive Link™ and the deliberate creation/fostering of effective groups assist in building Executive Link™ Boards into support networks, it is possible to identify more generally applicable prerequisites for developing a support capacity. The prerequisites, which follow sequentially, are: (1) a high level of personal self-confidence of the individual members (at least in the context of their group) and a high level of interpersonal communication skills, (2) getting to 'know' each other as individuals, developing shared values and trust, (3) coming to regard each other as credible sources of support and advice, and (4) commitment to the Board and fellow members, or being prepared to 'put in'.

1. ***Personal development: self-confidence and interpersonal communication skills***

   Before they are able and willing to give effective support to fellow Board members, people must get to know themselves and their own strengths and weaknesses. This member has come to realise that she can contribute useful ideas stemming from her non-farming background. After being in Executive Link™ for about 18 months, she now feels confident to contribute.

   > [Executive Link™] gives you a lot more confidence in the decisions that you make ... It really does make you feel as if you're part of something ... and that you do have a contribution to make, even if it is just ... ideas which are totally non-farming orientated. [Executive Link™ member 6]

   Improving interpersonal skills of listening, empathy and being able to take on various roles in the group, such as keeping the group on task and leadership, assists the group's development.

2. ***Knowing each other***

   'Getting to know' others, combined with shared experiences during Executive Link™ meetings, establishes a climate of openness in which members feel free to challenge others and are open to constructive criticism. The Boards learn effectively because the members value the climate of openness which encourages the challenging of others' practices.

   The Executive Link™ members said that getting to know each other and building trust were necessary before sensitive issues were introduced or discussed by members. Changes in these sensitive areas were the changes that permitted the businesses to make major improvements in performance. Once they got to know each other better, they started to refer fundamental problems or issues to the Board. Members talked about the change in the nature and depth of problems and issues brought to the Boards over time:

   > At the first couple of meetings ... everybody was so nice to each other. No-one's got any problems ... whereas now, it's going [the Board is working]. The people who didn't have any problems have got the biggest problems. [Executive Link™ member 8]

   Knowing others share your outlook helps because it provides support as you go about the overall management and operation of the businesses.

Trust, along with rapport, develops as the groups gets to know each other as people.

> Suddenly I was with a group of people who understood our problems because they all had the same. That was a good feeling ... now there is enough trust, trust and care. [Executive Link™ member 3]

Several members linked trust not only with getting to know their fellow members, but also with an incident where group members are exposed to the criticism of the group, or with a crisis for a member.

> When you get well into it you're pretty exposed, and once you've been exposed you build that trust and then the dynamics start, what you hearing here in some of the older groups you move on from those smaller issues into that deep stuff. [Focus group]

3. ***Credibility of group/members as sources of support***
Board members had to get to know each other before they could regard each other as credible sources of advice and support. Support from Boards as changes were made only came after the members understood each other, and after they developed some shared values and trust. .

As people got to know each other, they developed a sense of belonging, and a sense that all group members could make valued contributions. Only at this stage are they able to decide whether fellow members and the group as a whole are credible as sources of support. That is, whether reassurance, advice or practical help from the Board would be worth accepting. A member attending his second meeting commented that he was unsure how much notice he should take of advice from his Board, whereas this member of 18 months clearly regards his Board as a credible source of information and advice:

> Everyone's got a strength, and why not pool your resources and say ' Well, he's good at that, I'll ask him how to do it!'. It's a quicker way of finding out than bumbling around trying to do it yourself! [Executive Link™ member 7]

This Executive Link™ member sums up the advantages of having others available for interactive learning who are regarded as credible sources of advice and support:

> You can employ a consultant anytime you like ... but ... he only has one point of view. One-on-one consultancy is never going to be as powerful as the group consultancy because everybody in our Board or in the group has got an area of expertise ... So it's got a lot more bang for your buck. [Executive Link™ member 1]

4. ***Commitment (being prepared to 'put in')***
Commitment featured in the focus group and workshop conversations. Commitment reveals the presence of a norm of reciprocity. The existence of commitment to the Board is demonstrated by spontaneous actions which benefit others. One Board helped a member establish a computerised accounting system. Others speak more generally of actions which have helped them as they make changes to their businesses.

> We went to an auction the other day, and we bought this computer for [a fellow member] ... [He's] got a lot to offer. These things work both ways

> ... it's a complex web, and I'm sure if you help other people then you might get someone [to help you]. [Executive Link™ member 8]

Several members talked of an unspoken feeling of commitment, which members can draw upon when needed for dealing with difficult times.

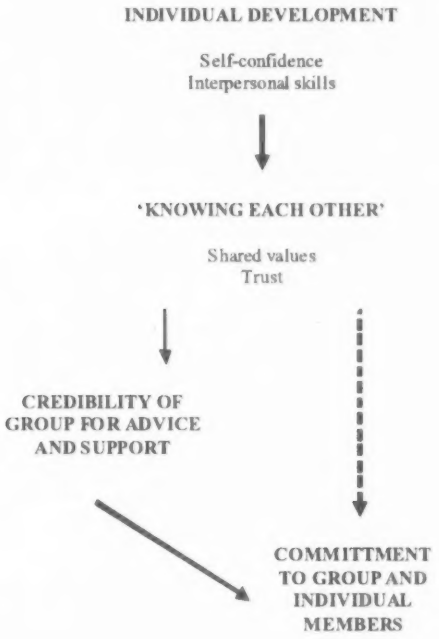
Not all the Boards are equally effective relative to others that have been established for the same length of time. The less effective Boards offer less support to their members. This member business is in a Board which does not contact each other between meetings.

> There's an inclination for the Board members to say 'you go away and do that'. We don't really get in touch with each other and say ' how are you getting on, can I help in any way' ... We could be a lot better. That's where we need that contact between the meetings. [Executive Link™ member 9]

The development of a support network: A model

Executive Link™ builds a support network for its members which assists members as they make changes to their business practices. From our observation of Executive Link™, and interviews with its members, the process whereby the Executive Link™ support network develops over time can be illustrated by Figure 1.

Figure 1: The development of a support network



Conclusions

Are the support networks of Executive Link™ social capital?

Our examination of Executive Link™, a group of farm businesses that learn together with the objective of making changes in their businesses, reveals that social capital is built by the group. As they learn together, the members generate horizontal social capital, as observed by Putnam (1993) in his study of Italy. The social capital is used as members make changes to their businesses. Consistent with the literature cited (Putnam 1993; Coleman 1988), better outcomes result for Executive Link™ members when they use their knowledge and skills along with the knowledge and skills of other members. We suggest that the social capital which 'oils' the change process for Executive Link™ members is knowledge of each others' expertise, other strengths, and weakness, along with recognition that fellow members are credible as sources of support and advice. The social capital manifests itself as a commitment to act for the benefit of fellow members. Several members talked of an unspoken feeling of commitment, which represents a store of social capital which can be drawn upon when needed for dealing with difficult times.

The structure of Executive Link™ facilitates the development of the support network, first, by systematically developing self confidence and interpersonal skills in training sessions

and as the Board members work together; and second, by providing shared experiences in training sessions and Board sessions. There is evidence that Executive Link™ follows the stages of group development described by Corey and Corey (1997), Benjamin et al. (1997) and Jacques (1991).

Executive Link™ is an example of a learning community which achieves positive economic outcomes because it is adaptable and willing to change. Member businesses are more resilient because the group acts as a support network that assists businesses as they make changes to take advantage of opportunities and minimise the effects of threats; the change processes use the social capital of the community. Members are committed to the group; there is a norm of reciprocity that leads to spontaneous actions for the benefit of others.

While the development of support structures which assist people to make change are recognised as being important, the potential for these structures to be duplicated for other business groups may be limited. The highly structured nature of Executive Link™, the high level of commitment and the recognition by participants of the need to change are significant factors in its success. Further work is needed to ascertain how the process described here whereby Executive Link™ members develop their support network can be transferred to other settings.

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CHAPTER 11
Groups that learn and how they do it

Elizabeth Kasl

For the last decade there has been a growing recognition that understanding small teams and their capacities to learn is key to understanding organisational capacity for creative engagement with the challenges of a rapidly changing world. In his influential book on learning organisation, Peter Senge (1990) writes, 'teams, not individuals, are the fundamental learning unit in modern organisations ... unless teams can learn, the organisation cannot learn' (p. 10).

My premise for this paper is that Senge's appraisal about the critical role of the team in creating a learning organisation is equally useful in understanding how small groups can be a strong force for community learning and transformative change. Drawing from my own experiences as well as the published work of others, I describe strategies for small-group learning, distinguish between learning and task modes in small groups, and offer a vision for how community learning practitioners might support small-group learning.

Three contexts for understanding small-group learning

Since my understanding about small-group learning is blended from three different contexts, I begin by describing briefly each context.

In case study research on team learning, Kathleen Dechant, Victoria Marsick and I (Kasl, Marsick & Dechant 1997) have studied how group learning processes and conditions change qualitatively as teams move through different modes of learning. We call these modes: fragmented, pooled, synergistic, and continuous.

In the *fragmented* mode, individuals learn separately, but the group does not learn as a holistic system. Members retain their separate views and are often not committed to working as a group. In the *pooled* mode, individuals begin to share information and perspectives in the interest of group efficiency and effectiveness. Sometimes, small clusters of individuals learn together, but the group as an entire unit does not learn; there is not yet an experience of having knowledge that is uniquely the group's own. In the *synergistic* mode, members create knowledge mutually. Divergent perspectives are integrated through dialectical processes that create shared meaning schemes. Simple phrases or metaphors from the team's experience often become code words for more elaborate meanings. Because each individual contributes to the team's knowledge, individuals integrate team knowledge into personal meaning schemes. As a result, knowledge created in a synergistic mode is frequently shared outside the group. Our concept of the *continuous* mode describes a team in which synergistic learning becomes habitual (Kasl, Marsick & Dechant 1997, pp. 230–231).

The second context from which I draw my understanding of small group learning is the practice of cooperative or collaborative inquiry, which for me, springs from two sources. In June of 1990, I joined other scholar-practitioners in what became a long-term commitment. We wanted to create and advocate new forms of collaboration in the academic workplace (Group for Collaborative Inquiry 1993), and we wanted to experiment with experience-based methods for research about transformative learning (Group for Collaborative Inquiry 1994). To symbolise our belief that knowledge is created in relationship, we chose a group name, which we use for publication.

A few months after helping to form the Group for Collaborative Inquiry, I discovered a collection of case studies published by Peter Reason as examples of new paradigm research (Reason 1988). In this volume, Reason describes cooperative inquiry as a research method, noting that it is closely linked with a process originally described as experiential inquiry by John Heron in 1971. Intrigued, I invited students from the Adult Education Guided Independent Study (AEGIS) program at Columbia University's Teachers College to explore with me this method as a possible dissertation strategy. Five adventurous students responded, and during the next three years they studied systematically how learning is experienced through the process that they named collaborative inquiry. Since the culmination of their project, I have continued to learn and practice this method—in the classroom, in the community, and in advising new dissertation projects.

The third context that informs my experience is my current practice as a teacher. I am deeply immersed in an innovative graduate program that has as a central tenet the importance of learning community. Students and faculty intentionally create learning community among themselves so that they can use their experience as a laboratory for learning how such communities form and sustain themselves (Elias 1997; Kasl & Elias 1997). During the third year of the program curriculum, students are required to create public demonstrations of what their group, as a community, has learned about transformative learning and change in human systems.

Group learning

I now draw from my experiences to explain why I believe small groups can be a strong force for community learning. My proposition is rooted in the concept of synergistic learning as my colleagues and I define it in the team learning model. The synergistic mode describes a process in which the group creates knowledge that all members endorse, that all members had a part in creating, and that all members can explain in their own words from the perspective of their individual and the group's experience. When a group operates synergistically, it creates a mutually held knowledge base from which actions can be agreed upon and taken. I propose that when small groups are learning in a synergistic mode, they provide a catalyst for community learning and transformative change because numbers of individuals share a knowledge base that they may infuse into environments outside the learning group, creating the possibility for greater community learning.

Playing on the title of this paper, 'Groups that learn and how they do it', I now examine the characteristics of groups that operate in the synergistic learning mode of learning, and then the strategies they use to support this capacity.

Groups that learn . . .

Cooperative and collaborative inquiry processes promote development of groups that operate in the synergistic mode. In his recent book, which summarises 25 years of reflection and practice, John Heron (1996) explains:

> Co-operative inquiry is a form of participative, person-centred inquiry, which does research with people not on them, or *about* them ... There is intentional interplay between reflection and making sense on the one hand, and experience and action on the other. There is explicit attention ... to the validity of the inquiry and its findings. There is a radical epistemology for a wide-ranging inquiry method that can be both informative about and transformative of any aspect of the human condition ... (pp. 19–20).

The process of learning from personal experience through extended, systematic cycles of reflection and action with others, is what the Teachers College doctoral students set out to study when they posed the research question, 'How is learning experienced in collaborative inquiry?' In their phenomenological analysis of six different collaborative inquiry groups (Bray 1995; Gerdau 1995; Smith 1995; Yorks 1995; Zelman 1995), they found that learning was experienced as:

- A striving for equilibrium between the individual and the group.
- Enhanced access to non-linguistic knowing.
- An empowering process.
- Energising.
- A change in critical subjectivity and critical inter-subjectivity.
- Having a boundary-less quality.

In the graduate program in which I currently work, the cohorts of adult students who are charged with the task of becoming learning communities also use extended, systematic cycles of reflection and action. As part of its demonstration of competency as a learning system, our fifth cohort conducted a phenomenological study addressing the question, 'What is the soul of Cohort 5?'. The cohort of 18 students identified five essential themes of soul, a quality that I think of as the group's extraordinary capacity to communicate authentically and respectfully, particularly about differences in race, gender, and sexual orientation. The themes of soul identified are:

- capacity for multiple perspectives;
- self awareness;
- improvisation;
- spiritual nature, and
- love, compassion, commitment.

Combining the two studies, I sketch a portrait of the small learning group that functions in the synergistic mode. Groups that learn synergistically must be composed of individuals who have capacity for self-awareness as well as recognition of and respect for others' perspectives. Although all members should enter the group with a minimum level of these capacities, the group should work consciously to promote capacity development—rationally and analytically through practicing critical subjectivity and critical inter-subjectivity, and spiritually through practicing love, compassion, and commitment. Groups that learn are ready to improvise, ever attuned to the emergence of learning possibilities. Members' non-linguistic knowing is often helped to emerge from the tacit to the explicit because the group is open to possibility and respectful of each member's potential for contribution. Individuals who experience group learning feel empowered by their new knowledge and often leave the learning group with more energy than they had at the beginning of the meeting. Because the learning is created from members' life experience and with each member's full participation, participants in learning groups do not distinguish boundaries between their group's learning and their lives. Thus, they infuse their learning into the larger community.

. . . And how they do it

In our research on team learning, my colleagues and I identified five learning processes used by teams in the two case studies: framing, reframing, experimenting, crossing boundaries, and integrating perspectives (Kasl, Marsick & Dechant 1997).

Curious about the strategies that enable teams to learn, Victoria Marsick and I undertook an analysis of several written reports of team or group learning (Kasl & Marsick 1997). We selected 20 reports that described groups that learned, at least part of the time in the synergistic mode as we defined it. Seven cases described learning in the workplace where the team had been vested with a management or problem-solving task, two described the learning experienced by research teams, and 11 described the learning experienced by cooperative or collaborative inquiry groups. Group size ranged from three to 20. With the exception of four groups, members were typically middle-class, white professionals. There are three cases from Great Britain, one from Australia, one from Canada, and 15 from the United States. We identified six strategies that we named as follows:

- Action/reflection processes.
- Finding meaning, not forcing it.
- Keeping faith in the midst of chaos and ambiguity.
- Going public.
- Embracing differences, learning from conflict.
- Reconceptualising time.

When he describes validity in cooperative inquiry, John Heron writes about coherence—among the cooperative inquirers, between the cooperative inquirers and their lived experience, and among the findings posited from the inquiry. He describes many strategies that cooperative inquirers can implement in order to maximise the likelihood that their inquiry will achieve coherence. These strategies for achieving meaningful group learning, or validity procedures as Heron (1996, pp. 131–157), calls them are:

- Research cycling.
- Balance of divergence and convergence.
- Balance between action and reflection.
- Use of descriptive, evaluative, explanatory, and applied reflection.
- Challenging uncritical subjectivity.
- Chaos and order.
- Management of unaware projections.
- Sustaining authentic collaboration.
- Open and closed boundaries.
- Variegated replication.
- Concerted action.

Strategies discerned from the case studies of learning groups are similar to the strategies prescribed as validity procedures by Heron. Groups that learn use extended cycles of action and reflection, including processes of framing, reframing, experimenting, and integrating perspectives. Members at times focus inwardly, and at other times readily cross boundaries between their own group and others. They learn how to be comfortable with chaos, ambiguity, and conflict because they understand that these states of being are potentially a cauldron for generative learning if they can also balance divergence with convergence, challenge uncritical subjectivity, manage unaware projections, and sustain authentic collaboration. 'Finding meaning/not forcing it' is a component of what Heron calls explanatory reflection, referring to various strategies for taking a group outside analytic modes of knowing, such as establishing norms for story-telling, experiential exercises, using art and metaphor, or intentionally allowing the group to go 'off task' by

engaging in associational thinking that on the surface seems not to be moving the agenda forward.

Two of the strategies identified from the analysis of the 20 case studies are not directly related to Heron's discussion. These are 'going public' and 'reconceptualising time.' Kasl and Marsick (1997) explain:

> [P]reparing to share the group's knowledge with an audience outside the group was a catalyst for learning. The process of preparing interim oral reports for outside funding agents consolidated learning for two groups of community women. Experiencing respectful appreciation from their audiences precipitated in the women new respect for the importance of their work as well as growing self-confidence ... When groups prepared written reports, the process of reflecting on written words uncovered differences in perspectives that had not before been visible, and served as an impetus for further learning ... Workplace teams experienced the preparation of reports for managers or clients as an impetus for learning. In all cases, the act of going public was associated with a deadline, and therefore forced the group into an accelerated process of confirming the knowledge it had been creating ...
>
> When groups perceive themselves to be created to address a particular task, the pressure of task accomplishment makes group learning difficult ... This tension between learning and output is highly evident in the way in which the group experiences time. We suggest that group learning is enhanced when groups learn to reconceptualise time as a resource because they can then: generate ideas for which relevance is not immediately apparent; cycle back and forth between action and reflection, taking time to develop skilfulness with reflection; and create a context for shared history that leads to new ways of thinking, feeling, or acting. Research reports support our hypothesis, but also suggest that groups experience difficulty in reconceptualising time in this way if members perceive their focus primarily as getting the job done, and if nothing is done to assist members to think about time differently (p. 252).

Distinguishing between learning and task modes

Several of Heron's prescribed validity procedures mention a balance between opposites. I suggest that a group's orientation toward learning and task is another pairing that calls for balance. When groups reach convergence without adequate experience of divergence, when groups force convergence or acquiescence by stifling diverse perspectives and critical subjectivity, when they allow action to outweigh reflection, when they impose order too quickly in order to escape members' fear of chaos, ambiguity, or running out of time, they prevent themselves from learning. At such moments, group members are likely to perceive their goal as the accomplishment of a task. If the task calls for generative learning, the group impedes its own effectiveness in a paradoxical pursuit of task efficiency. At the same time, as demonstrated by the strategy called 'going public,' turning to task can catalyse and accelerate group learning. Groups need to develop a metacognition of how to move back and forth between task and learning modes, and be deliberate in creating opportunities to make those moves.

Small groups and community learning

I close with a story about the interaction between small group and community learning, based on experiences in the program in which I currently am teaching. My story is about how learning in a number of different small groups is gathering force to create community

learning in my institution, as well as in the larger community. The learning is about white consciousness, how it perpetuates racism, and how white people might take action to make change in their institutions and communities.

This learning began in 1993, when a new program was started within the institution. A student tells the story of how the new program catapulted the institution into learning about white consciousness here.

The Story of the MIX

by

Mat Schwarzman

We are the MIX, the Multicultural Inquiry eXchange, and this is our creation story. Our group is the second residential doctoral cohort in the new School for Transformative Learning at the California Institute of Integral Studies in San Francisco. We began our graduate work in August 1993 with a six-day intensive orientation, to be followed by monthly weekend meetings. At that time, the group consisted of two faculty and nine students. Both faculty and eight of the nine students were European Americans; one student was African American. Six of the group were women, five were men.

During the August intensive each member made an hour-long autobiographical presentation. Combining anecdotes, images, songs, and chronologies, each attempted—passionately but carefully—to disclose personal information that seemed relevant for fostering understanding among people who were about to begin a long and no doubt difficult journey. Victor, the African American member of the group, was one of the last. As he spoke, it was clear how different his story was because of its emphasis on how the colour of his skin affected his life. A powerful silence came over the group.

As someone accustomed to being in white-dominated situations where his experiences were likely to be unique, Victor tried to protect himself from the likelihood of further probing by requesting beforehand that his story be left to stand on it own, without discussion. 'This is necessary for a lot of people of colour,' he observed. 'Otherwise, we can be turned into objects of white people's curiosity.' Nonetheless, Suzanne, a white woman in the group, pressed Victor to keep sharing his experience. Two or three times he refused her request, 'feeling,' he later explained, 'dangerously close to tapping into a reservoir of pain and anger that my life's experience has taught me not to share with unsuspecting white people.' Suzanne wanted to know more, learn more, understand more, and eventually posed a question that propelled Victor to the explosion that he desperately wanted to avoid. 'This is just how it starts,' he wrote later, 'and it ends with racist stereotypes of violent African American males being reinforced perfectly.'

No-one in the group remembers many of the details of the next few minutes. In many ways, they're unimportant. The situation was charged and raw. Many arguments were made concerning the implications of Suzanne's and Victor's argument. Some agreed that he was being reverse-racist, others felt Suzanne was being unfeeling if sincere, and still others argued that this type of incident was going to continue unless something was done about the radically imbalanced racial dynamics in the group. Some members threatened to leave if steps were not taken to remedy the situation. Others threatened to leave if they were.

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After a break, an animated debate continued, not only during that day, but also over the remainder of the residency. Eventually, the group agreed to lobby the school administration for support to reopen admissions in order to recruit students of colour to balance the learning community. Collectively, the group drafted a letter to the Dean and secured a promise of recruitment scholarships. Members pledged to organise an aggressive recruitment effort and participate actively in the accelerated admissions process.

By its September cohort weekend, the MIX had become a group of 19 students. Thanks to an incredible organising effort to which almost every member contributed, eight new people of colour joined the cohort—three African American women, two African American men, a Chicana, a Chicano, and a Chinese American. Since that time, whites have been in a minority in the MIX.

Writing from the vantage point of two years later, it is clear that this opening episode in our history is central to who and what the MIX is. Having to unearth, expose and negotiate deeply held beliefs and ways of being in order to be and work together has profoundly transformed almost everyone in the group. At every turn, race and ethnicity are lenses for understanding human systems and for deconstructing social issues. All whites in the MIX acknowledge being profoundly affected by their experience in the group. Expecting to learn about what it means to be African American, Latino, and Asian American, they have instead most deeply and transformatively learned what it means to be *white* . (Kasl & Elias 1997, p. 23).

Mat begins his essay by explaining that he is telling the creation story of the MIX. He is also telling the creation story of community learning about white consciousness in the institution. In 1996, as part of its public demonstration of its competence as a learning system, the MIX created a research paper, based on its own experience as well as theory and research of others, about the relationship between transformative learning and multiculturalism. Although this formal paper is important, it is not the key to understanding how knowledge moved from the MIX to the larger community. The key explanatory concept is the 'boundary-less quality' of group learning. All of the white people in that cohort took their growing consciousness into their lives. Faculty inside the MIX became a conduit for new insights into the larger program; students inside the MIX interacted with students in other cohorts and programs. A chain of effect can be charted: the cohort that followed the MIX engaged in a six-month cultural synergy process on racism, a process rooted in a strategy of having groups develop racial consciousness within race groups, before attempting to dialogue across race groups (Barlas et al. in press). The next cohort included as part of its group competency demonstration, a cooperative inquiry conducted by four students on the effects of white norms and consciousness.

During this cohort's public event, just completed in 1998, the white consciousness, cooperative inquiry team challenged the attendees to action. Responding to that challenge, two teams are now making action plans. A group of students and faculty of colour is designing a formal course in cultural consciousness for students of colour, and is at the same time making plans to collaborate on scholarly projects. A group of white students and faculty is finalising plans to convene a number of cooperative inquiry groups, each of which will explore some aspect of white consciousness. We are providing a coach who will be available to give technical assistance with the cooperative inquiry method, and are planning a culminating conference so that all groups can come together and share their knowledge about white consciousness. Reaching outside our program to invite

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participation, we already have faculty and students from sister colleges in the San Francisco Bay area who plan to join our inquiry.

A final reflection

In telling my story about how small groups that learn can create learning in the larger community, I mentioned specifically one characteristic of the learning group—boundary-less quality. I could now retell the story, demonstrating and amplifying how this story illustrates all the characteristics and learning strategies described in this paper. Time and space prevent such a retelling, but I invite the reader to engage with the story through the lens of the concepts described in this paper—characteristics of groups that learn and the strategies they use to do it.

I believe that community learning can be served when practitioners who hope to foster community learning focus their efforts on developing capacity in the community for small group learning. An important factor in the story I just related is the fact that we have spent five years developing basic inquiry skills. The inquiries that people have pursued have been about a great variety of topics, but now that we are launching a project in which the community focuses on one topic, we have a critical mass of people who are well-practiced in learning through systematic cycles of action and reflection, using an extended epistemology, with attention to validity.

Even if a community has nurtured its skilfulness in small-group inquiry, there are daunting challenges for the community learning practitioner. Often, we focus on community learning when there is a need for change and when constituencies have a stake in the direction of the change. Returning to the example of my story, I note that one of our biggest challenges will be to struggle with some participants' desire to hasten the learning process for others. There is an all-too-human temptation for would-be inquirers who have already learned about a topic to want to 'teach' others what they have come to know. In the case of our project, some participants may be more focused on the task of changing the oppressive structures created by white consciousness by prodding others into action, than they are on the process of engaging in an inquiry where all learn authentically from personal cycles of reflection and action. Those of us who are the primary impetus for the project are prone to the same mistake. We believe that learners are most likely to change significantly when they learn authentically from their own experience, and at the same time, we want them to discover particular truths about white consciousness. Herein is a great paradox for community learning practitioners. The kind of learning that we hope we can foster cannot be shaped or controlled. We can put processes in place, but then must stand back so the learning has space to take root and time to grow.

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CHAPTER 12
Spiritual impact statements: A key to sustainability

Patrick Bradbery, G (Jock) Fletcher and R (Bob) Molloy

Regional development has, in the past, paid little attention to the spiritual or social context, or indeed the human interconnectedness of the region. Rational economic criteria are developed and implemented through a policy process which is predominantly used as the basis for specifying the appropriate development pathway for a region, although more recently ecological impact statements and community-based processes have been included. There has also been very little attention given to the concepts and practice of civil society or social capital. Whilst some attention may be provided to Aboriginal/Torres Strait Islander sites in developing regional development plans, little or no attention is given to discernment of the spirit of the land or its people, in the region itself. In this chapter, the importance of including such discernment in planning and implementing development is identified. It is argued that sustainable development of a region by necessity includes consideration of the natural, human, and spiritual resources of the region.

Introduction

Following the path of regional development which has paid little attention to the spiritual and social context has led to impasse situations, most graphically illustrated by the Hindmarsh Island Bridge dispute, but repeated on a smaller scale throughout Australia and on many scales throughout the world. Perhaps even more disturbing are the developments that have taken place without any such intervention, when it is only after the event that the damage is recognised and lamented.

This chapter deals with the question of what is meant by the term spirituality then moves on to a presentation of what is proposed as an ideal image of regional development. It describes some aspects of the present policy reality, and considers what needs to be done in order to facilitate the movement from the present reality towards the ideal image.

Spiritual—what does that mean?

What is it that we mean when we use the word spiritual? The *Microsoft Word 7 Thesaurus* suggests 'ethereal, airy, holy or religious', as alternatives to the word spiritual. The *Penguin Dictionary of Religion* suggests that:

> The singular concept (of spirit) defies definition. Denoting the form of being which has no distinctively material properties, 'spirit' (derived like its equivalents in many languages from words for breath or wind, as invisible, yet powerful and life-giving), connotes life, consciousness, self-activity. RELIGION is often regarded as having to do with 'the things of the spirit', what is spiritual (Hinnells 1984, p. 310).

This then leads us to the concept of the sacred, which may be confined to humans, or more typically is extended in some way beyond the human, not necessarily to the extent of regarding other entities as ensouled. Durkheim suggested that:

> All known religious beliefs, whether simple or complex, present one common characteristic. They presuppose a classification of all things, real and ideal, of which men think into two classes or opposed groups, generally designated by two distinct terms which are translated well enough by the words *profane* and *sacred*. This

> division of the world into two domains is the distinctive trait of religious thought; the beliefs, myths, dogmas and legends are either representations or systems of representations which express the nature of sacred things, the virtues and powers which are attributed to them, or their relations with each other and with profane things (1912, p. 52).

Mircea Eliade (1983), while accepting Durkheim's argument that the sacred/profane distinction is at the centre of the theory of religion, broke with Durkheim over a central issue. Like Durkheim, Eliade insists that the sacred and profane are 'wholly other'; the sacred is of a wholly different order, a reality that does not belong to our world, in objects that are an integral part of our natural 'profane' world. However, for Durkheim, the sacred is not an intrinsic property of things but is rather a title bestowed by humans on other persons, places or things, while Eliade reverses this relationship. For him, it is the sacred, which acts upon the human subject.

The sacred for Eliade (1975) is an active property of things. The sacred is saturated with being. It is real. In contrast, the profane is chaotic and unreal. A prime function of the sacred is to 'found the world', to provide a point of orientation.

In the context of this chapter, we would like to emphasise the unifying aspect of the sacred. We have chosen to express this unification as *interconnectedness*. Thus when we are referring to the spiritual impact of developments, we are referring to the effect that it has on the interconnectedness of human with human, but also on the interconnectedness of the human with plants, animals and inanimate objects as well.

Sacred space

Sacred spaces and times are among the most common, visible forms of religious expression. Clearly delineated from ordinary or profane space or time, they are the major matrices and foci through which religious systems make contact with what is deemed holy. A major effect of these concepts is 'to show that religiousness is not just a matter of beliefs but also of *observance and ritual participation*' (Smith 1995, p. 945, italics ours). From this we can derive the notion that a space and/or a time that is observed, and becomes a focus of ritual participation, can be regarded as a sacred space or time.

It is important to note also that space can be designated as sacred by virtue of its strategic significance to the occupants or users of the space. In this sense, the sharp delineation of the sacred and profane adopted by Durkheim, and less so by Eliade begins to blur.

> The adjective *sacred* connotes both dedication to a transhuman purpose, and powerful, in the sense that participants acknowledge a superhuman connection at these specially defined junctures. ... Space can have a sacred aspect in an even more elemental, territorial sense by virtue of the intensity and strategicness of the social boundaries it signifies, eg. hearths, thresholds, homes, villages, or 'the motherland' (Smith 1995, p. 945).

We can extend this lack of distinction even further when we include the wide spectrum of sacred space configurations that exist from culture to culture. Thus it is possible to envisage sacred space ranging from the natural landforms of the Aboriginal Dreaming, through the local church or synagogue or mosque, to the palatial cathedrals of Europe, and even to structures not commonly associated with religion, such as sporting arenas. Who among us would be game to tell a Melburnian that the Melbourne Cricket Ground is not a sacred place?

We would also argue that so-called *heritage sites* are further examples of sacred spaces. These act as memory banks for the community which allows it to more readily recall a time when a significant interconnecting event occurred in that place. In this sense, it may be connecting the present with the past that is significant. Again, Smith claims:

> Sacred space sometimes forms around places that are associated with great events in the memory of the community. Scriptures, myths and legends recount sacred histories that tell of the miraculous or world-founding deeds of gods and ancestors performed at certain sites, (1995, pp. 945–46).

In summary then, we put forward the proposition that the interconnectedness of humans with one another and with their environment is an expression of unity or wholeness. The vehicle for this interconnectedness is the soul or spirit of the person and/or environmental objects. The manifestation of the presence of such a spirit or *djang* as it is called by some Indigenous Australians, in a place is designated as the sacredness of the place or site. The sacredness of a place may be related to its immediate impact on the interconnectedness of the people living in, or otherwise using that space. Alternatively there may be a more tenuous relationship with past events and/or people, which are of spiritual significance. Using this sense of sacred, we may include heritage sites as sacred sites.

The ideal image

If we accept that a greater level of interconnectedness is a desirable goal, then we can start to imagine a state of being where such a goal is at least in the process of being achieved. This imaginal process can then be transformed into some more or less concrete characteristics which can help us to identify whether we are approaching or receding from such an ideal state. This is not to deny that ultimately what we are seeking is somewhat like Pirsig's (1976) concept of quality, i.e. ultimately it is something that we intuit rather than approach from the purely rational approach of measurement.

As a starting point for this process, and in no way wishing to limit it, we would suggest that a society in which there was a high degree of interconnectedness would be one in which there were relatively high levels of:

1. Community involvement.
2. Subsidiarity (decisions being made at the lowest possible level—'grass roots').
3. Collegiality (decisions made by the group affected rather than by an individual or sub-group for the group).
4. Creativity.
5. Systems thinking (an interconnected world view).
6. Physical and mental health.
7. Cultural awareness.
8. Meaningful employment.
9. Respect for other people and their rights and entitlements.
10. Egalitarianism (not to be confused with uniformity).

It is fairly self-evident that we as yet do not have a range of measures available to us for the evaluation of these characteristics. One of the challenges then, is to develop such a range of measures. In the interim, it is possible for us to use some 'positive negatives' or

'mirror' indices, which we do have available in order to get some sense of whether our spirituality is increasing or decreasing.

These so-called mirror indices are measures of the absence rather than the presence of spirituality, and would include things such as:

1. Crime rates.
2. Morbidity indices.
3. Suicide rates.
4. Size of the 'health' budget.
5. Distribution of wealth.
6. Distribution of income.
7. Family breakdown rates.
8. Unemployment rates.

It is important once again to emphasise that these are all second or third order measures of spirituality or a 'sacred society', and any such measures need to be in some sense congruent with the intuitive sense of the sacred or spiritual essence of a place or community. It is vital that we do not lose sight of the essentially numinous nature of the concepts with which we are dealing. We cannot directly measure the *djang* or spirit of a sacred site, nor of a community.

Discerning the sacredness of a place or the spirituality of a community is more likely to be achieved by listening to people, particularly the Elders. By listening to a community's stories, songs and poetry, by interpreting their art works, by studying the ways in which they depict the interconnectedness of people with one another and with their environment, we are more likely to form an accurate perception of the presence or absence of spirit.

However, as two of the authors have argued elsewhere (Fletcher & Bradbery 1995, p. 16), taking this step will involve a risk, a risk of being wrong. There are no formulae every situation is different.

The present reality

In the present reality of regional development, there is little concern for matters beyond the economic and the rational. Even the adoption of the Environmental Impact Statement process is one that is heavily charged with a perception of the economic impact on the environment rather than using spiritual values, values which recognise our interconnectedness with nature and with our yet unborn progeny.

Drawing on a paper written by one of the authors (Fletcher 1997) we present below a summary of the regional development policies of the former Labor Federal government and the current Coalition government's regional development policies.

The previous (ALP) government's regional development policy consisted of:

- A regional vision, regional economic development strategies and the implementation of specific initiatives.
- The establishment and operation of regional groups.
- Best practice approaches, management tools for regional development practitioners and training.
- First-stop shops for program delivery.

- Partnerships and the establishment of consultative mechanisms.

Whilst this regional development policy acknowledged bottom-up processes and community participation, which are consistent with a spiritually-imbued approach, the implementation policies for the strategy remained vague and indeterminant, with individual regional development organisations carrying the vanguard. This of course could be a most appropriate way to implement a spiritual dimension, but it requires a more profound development of consciousness than currently exists.

The current (Liberal-National Coalition) government's approach to regional development can be seen as a series of independent measures that are initiatives for regional Australia, with many of these arising out of different Ministerial portfolios. It is not a regional development policy as such nor does it have any apparent philosophical framework or cohesive strategy. Further, there is no reference to process and analysis as the two legs of regional development. Essentially, it is a top-down policy approach, which is traditional interventionism, with no bottom-up based processes, which are essential to the development of a more holistic or spiritual approach to development. Absent from the policy is any concept of community self-reliance (subsidiarity).

Thus, although it can be argued that the regional development policy of the former ALP government is more consistent with moving towards the ideal we are proposing, neither policy is capable of moving far from the *status quo*.

Moving from the present reality towards the ideal image

If the aim of regional (or other) development is sustainability, this means acknowledging an interrelated concept of civil society, social capital and spirituality within an integrated community-based process. Understanding this in both theory and praxis means recognising what regional (or other) communities are, and what they could become. As part of this integrated framework, civil society can be conceptualised as a self-managing community facilitated by government. This raises questions about the appropriateness of our present form of government for achieving this outcome, but that is an issue that needs to be addressed elsewhere.

A fundamental part of this holistic framework is social capital, which represents the trust, openness, norms and networks within a community. What is most significant within this system is that any attempt to harness voluntary cooperation is easier in a community where there is an inherited stock of social capital in the forms of reciprocity and networks of civic engagement. This sort of integrated system would lead to sustainable regional (or other) development through a facilitative pathway, subject to a collective consciousness.

The development of that collective consciousness is a spiritual process. It is one that takes account of the interconnectedness of the people, of the sacredness of place, and which uses sacramental processes to further enhance that interconnectedness or spirituality. (A sacramental process is one that embodies that which it signifies—in the vernacular it 'walks the talk'.)

It is on this basis that we argue that the fundamental process on which regional (or other) development plans should be grown is the process of spiritual discernment. This process, which would include listening with the heart as well as the head to the Elders (and others) in the community, and identifying trends in appropriate indicators, can provide the sustainable foundation on which environmental impact statements and then cost benefit analyses can be built. The outcome of the process of discernment, which we have labelled

a Spiritual Impact Statement, would once again allow us to integrate the concepts of a community, which is based on, place (sacred sites) and a community of interests (interconnectedness).

Such an approach would allow us to adopt a truly sustainable approach to development. However, it would be foolish to underestimate the change of consciousness that is required for us to bring such a change about. Until we have brought back together the disparate parts of our individual psyches and then the collective ones of our local communities, we cannot hope to heal the divisions, which are rampant in our national psyche. Such a healing process is an essential part of the consciousness raising that will allow the introduction and use of spiritual impact statements and hence make sustainable development more than an illusion.

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PART THREE

Best practice in learning for developing communities

CHAPTER 13
International models of community sustainability

Allen B Moore, Lilian Hill and Rusty Brooks

International travel can provide opportunities to learn about alternative models for community sustainability. During the past three years, the authors have had opportunities to travel internationally and at the same time attend international community development conferences, present keynote papers, interview community developers, and visit unique community development projects. Discussions with community developers and community residents provided insight into the process, methods, and program design of community development in other locations and cultures.

Interviews, site visits, and photographs were taken of community development workers, villages, and local residents in Tasmania and Bendigo, Australia; Botswana in southern Africa; in Kampung Endah, Malaysia; and Chia-Yi, Taiwan; as well as in the Southeastern United States. The theme for the interviews and visits was to learn about community development practice and to identify all or parts of projects that have the potential for being long-term and sustainable efforts.

Examples of alternative models

This chapter presents brief descriptions of community development projects in several international locations and the United States along with comments about the sustainability of the projects. Conclusions about common elements of these examples despite disparate cultural origins, are drawn in the summary.

Example 1

The first example is from Botswana in southern Africa. The Village Industries Program in Gabane, located approximately 30 kilometres from the capital city of Gaborone, employs about 60 individuals from the local village community. Grain sorghum is milled into cereal, packaged in five, ten, 25 and larger pound bags, and shipped throughout Botswana. There is also a pottery where artists produce traditional masks, pottery, and beautifully carved gourds to sell to tourists. Another product from the Village Industries Program is concrete blocks for buildings. Other ventures including welding and metalworking have been attempted with limited success. Poultry has also been a successful venture, although they were experiencing problems with a virus when we visited. Milled grain sorghum, poultry products, pottery, and concrete blocks are products that have been marketed successfully in Gaborone and throughout Botswana.

SUSTAINABILITY

The Village Industries experience can be sustained with markets for their products. If these markets are eliminated for some reason then the Village Industries Program will have to identify new products to market. This has happened with two products already, carved gourds and dried flower arrangements. These products became difficult to produce due to the prolonged drought the country is experiencing, making raw materials hard to obtain. Dried flowers also have gone out of fashion so production was discontinued. Food and building materials for houses and shelter are basic needs in all cultures so there should be a sustainable trend with these products. The tourism potential is expanding so locally produced crafts should also be a much-needed commodity.

Example 2

Located in the outskirts of Zimbabwe's capital city Harare, sits a magical place called Champungu Sculpture Park. Zimbabwe is famous for its stone sculptures and many of the artists are known internationally. You will also find stone sculptures being sold alongside roadways and in markets. Many of these roadside sculptors are competent, but it is a particular honour to be included among the artists at Champungu. The privilege of practicing one's art at the park is a considerable boost for an artist's career. The park selects artists, and even the opportunity to become an apprentice to a recognised artist is competitive.

The park is located on about ten acres or four hectares of land. Upon entering the park, you are allowed to wander among sculptures strategically placed in the attractively landscaped property, take photographs, and talk to working artists. There is a small building where sculptures are sold, be they small (8–12 inches tall) or large (the size of an adult person). The park will ship sculptures anywhere in the world and the buyer receives a certificate authenticating the piece as a genuine original.

SUSTAINABILITY

The owner donated the land for the park. Champungu Sculpture Park functions as a tourist location (it is marketed in all the hotels), a place for artists to work and for budding artists to learn their art, a place to exhibit and sell sculpture, and also provides education for school groups, fostering a sense of cultural pride. In addition to the work of resident artists, the park mounts travelling exhibits, creates posters and exhibits books, as well as published small booklets about individual artists.

Example 3

Sheffield, Tasmania is a small town in Australia that has promoted tourism, culture, and heritage by using murals on buildings in and near the town. Professional artists were commissioned to paint more than 30 murals throughout the community. Since the first mural was painted more than 12 years ago, the number of tourists visiting Sheffield has increased dramatically. Sheffield is located near Cradle Mountain, another major tourist attraction for the area. Visitors travelling to Cradle Mountain often stop in Sheffield to view the murals, visit the welcome centre, stop for tea and a meal, shop in local stores, and learn about the various stories related to individual murals.

SUSTAINABILITY

For more than 12 years people in Sheffield have maintained, expanded, improved, and promoted the murals as a community-building experience for visitors to that region. The murals have been an economic benefit to merchants in the community.

Example 4

Deloraine, a small town in Tasmania, Australia, has a very efficient recycling and waste disposal facility. The facility has been in development or operation for more than five years. The recycling facility, or TIP, as it is called, is under the jurisdiction of the town council, staffed by individuals who have an interest in and knowledge about recycling, and is further supported by community volunteers. Individuals who bring items to the TIP are encouraged to sort their rubbish into aluminium, glass, plastic, wood, metal, organic materials, and useable clothing or articles. The useable clothing and other articles, such as sports equipment, picture frames, and so on, are cleaned and placed in an on-site recycling store that is called an Op Shop (Opportunity Shop).

SUSTAINABILITY
Community developers can determine the commitment and care a community has for the environment by the appearance of the TIP. A clean, organised, efficient, and odour-free TIP is an indicator of the commitment to the recycling and waste management principles of sustainable community development. When concern for the environment, recycling, and waste disposal is a critical component of community infrastructure, it is a strong indicator of sustainability.

Example 5
Ravenshoe in North Queensland, Australia is a small town that has identified a unique niche for the entire world. This region is the host location for 12 species of possum that are found in the forest in this area. This is the only location in the world that has 12 different species of possum. An internationally-recognised researcher lives in this area to conduct studies of these creatures. In the past three years, individuals and small groups have begun to promote this region to themselves and to others outside the region as a place which is unique for its natural beauty and for the special animals that live there. Their community motto is 'anything is possum-able and nothing is impossum-able'.

SUSTAINABILITY
This spirit of creativity has sparked several different ideas for ways to market their area as an international tourist attraction. Residents are knowledgeable and protective of the unique environment and habitat that support the possums.

Example 6
In Australia, the sustainability of commercial agriculture is a common theme on the Internet, affectionately known as the net, although the quality of the discussion varies considerably. Conference areas include sustainable agriculture, climatic conditions and trends, animal husbandry issues, land care protection and preservation, and a wide variety of miscellaneous topics. The Department of Primary Industries (DPI) sponsors a number of telecottages in rural communities to foster use of computer and related telecommunication systems. Likewise, the discussion groups can be used to monitor international political issues, such as the progress of the US Farm Bill through Congress, details of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), and activities of the Food and Agricultural Organisation of the United Nations (FAO).

SUSTAINABILITY
Debate between agricultural producers at the local level, and with agriculturists at both the national and international levels, may be followed by accessing discussion groups and the listservs that are created, or that already exist, for different topical areas. Undoubtedly, the range of listserv-based discussion groups will increase substantially in the future. The fact that rural peoples and rural communities can, and will, access these sources of information is critical to their understanding, and to creating improvement and change.

Example 7
People in Miller County, Georgia, USA had a vision for what they wanted to do in their town and county. Their vision initially developed over ten years and has been discussed, displayed, and updated as community members have systematically worked on each element of their action plans. Activities included developing a community play called

Swamp Gravy, putting up street lights in the town square, remodelling an old hotel into period lodging and dining facilities, expanding their community recreation facilities and park along Spring Creek, supporting the development of a new cotton gin, promoting outdoor recreation, and most recently building a golf course for the community and region.

SUSTAINABILITY

The city of Colquitt, Georgia, has an active Chamber of Commerce, involved and supportive Mayor and Town Council, and many volunteers who work on community projects when called upon. City and County cooperation is the key to the many changes and improvements in the area.

Example 8

Nine communities, which share the Savannah River and three lakes (Hartwell, Russell, and Thurmond/Clarks-Hill) on the South Carolina/Georgia, USA borders are working together to promote the area for two purposes: tourism and small business development. The people involved in the Upper Savannah River Economic Coalition (USREC) want the area to be a tourist destination and a place where small businesses can be started and survive for the long term. Approximately 30 individuals, with diverse interests such as art, culture, history, business, industry, and government have been meeting since June 1996 to reduce the barriers associated with state and local boundaries and to promote regional development. The group meets on the third Wednesday of every month to work on projects and activities of mutual interest that promote tourism and small business development.

SUSTAINABILITY

USREC participants have been successful in (1) publishing an events calender for nine counties; (2) jointly sponsoring tours and trips for tourists to some of these events; (3) preparing a web page to promote the region; (4) identifying tourism attractions in the region and including this information on their web page, and (5) producing a list of sites, attractions, and venues for retirees visiting or living in the area. Each meeting is held at a different location either in Georgia or South Carolina to promote the unique venues and the potential for tourism and small business development in each location.

Example 9

US Highway 441 runs north and south through the state of Georgia and lies east of the city of Atlanta. This highway enters Georgia in the mountains in the north and traverses through the state crossing three interstate highways (I-85, I-20, and I-16) that are major east-west directional thru-ways. There are 17 counties that lie along or touch Highway 441 and over 41 different cities, towns, and communities located along the highway. Community teams of three to five members from ten of the counties along the highway met in Athens, Georgia in the spring of 1998 to discuss working together regarding their interest in promoting tourism, scenic beauty, and unique heritage and cultural venues. The three-day meeting resulted in a plan that included development of highway sites, sounds, smells, and unique places map. Middle-school children from Dublin, Georgia started the idea of putting unique and special places on a long piece of cloth and the idea literally grew in size until it was over six feet wide and 40 feet long. At each meeting leading up to the three-day retreat, participants were asked to mark their unique and special places on the cloth.

SUSTAINABILITY

Since the retreat in April of 1998, the group has met six times a year, every other month, at different locations along the highway to share ideas, discuss local projects, and form a nonprofit organisation that can apply for funding and organise their resources for promoting heritage tourism. Each community requests to host the meeting and provides a meeting site, tours to unique and special places, and a meal for the participants. The group has its own web page that is the result of a student assignment for a marketing class at the University of Georgia. Two teams in the class were asked to develop a marketing campaign for promoting the corridor. Each team travelled the highway, spent the night in some of the communities, interviewed residents, visited unique and special places, and designed a marketing strategy. Team strategies have been merged and a middle-school technology class has put much of the information on a web page for the corridor group. The US 441 Heritage Corridor group continues to meet regularly and work on individual community and joint county projects, as well as seek funding for larger tourism promotion projects.

Example 10

Malaysia is an interesting country because of its cultural, religious, and racial diversity. The population consists of Malay (55 per cent), people who emigrated generations ago from China (30 per cent) and India (10 per cent), as well as a smattering of people from many other countries. People are conscious of race riots that happened shortly after independence was achieved 30 years ago and no-one wants them to happen again. These days, people refer to 'diversity, with unity'. Another item that makes Malaysia interesting is the tremendous development that has happened in the country over the past 30 years.

One of the places visited was a village of Kampung Endah, located south of Kuala Lumpur. A council consisting of representatives from the community and a headman ran the village. The village was insistent that women should sit on the council since they brought up different issues for discussion. This village had won many competitions for their development efforts and the walls of the meetinghouse were covered with plaques commemorating their successes. The village was small and very well kept. In addition to neat homes, they have built a meetinghouse, school buildings, and a small library. Computer technology is available in the library and local schools. Computers turned out to be one of their major foci in their development efforts. Another emphasis was a communal farm, an income-generation project. Not everyone participated, but it did provide economic opportunity for people who chose to. The village had purchased several acres for cultivation to grow cash crops. Another focus was achieving high literacy rates within the village.

SUSTAINABILITY

One of the reasons the village is so successful is that the people have very clear goals. In fact, many of these goals were posted on the walls of the meetinghouse in several languages, even though the people who live in the village are mostly Malay. Some of these signs describe specific goals, but many are statements of values and inspiration. Another reason that they are successful is that they avail themselves of assistance from community developers associated with government agencies and universities.

Example 11

While attending an international conference about learning communities at Chung-Cheng National University in Chia-Yi, Taiwan, it was possible to visit two communities in this

area. One of the communities was in the Hsin-Kang Township (Chia-Yi County) and the other was Won-ten Community (Chia-Yi City).

a) **Hsin-Kang Foundation** located in Chia-Yi County is a well-known and famous grassroots organisation that has been successful in locating financial resources to build a community centre that has a library and meeting space for residents. Residents can come to the centre to meet in small groups, to read resource materials, and to work together on community issues and projects. The building that houses the community centre is located within easy walking distance of many residents or it is an easy commute by motorbike or car. There are few paid staff and many volunteers that work at the community centre to assist residents in their community development work. The centre director is well known in Chia-Yi as well as throughout the country and at state government levels, so there is access to political and financial networks in Taiwan. The faculty from the Institute of Adult Education at Chung-Cheng National University has assisted centre staff and volunteers in identifying the learning and community organisation needs of residents in the area.

   Sustainability
   The centre is located in the community and is accessible to residents who use it for meetings and resource information. There are representatives from the community who advise the centre about providing outreach services to residents.

b) **Won-ten Community** is a small neighbourhood within Chia-Yi City that has decided to work together on an issue of mutual concern. Rubbish in the neighbourhood has been a concern to residents. Paper, plastics, glass containers, aluminium, and a host of other items had been discarded in the neighbourhood and several people wanted to do something about this situation. The faculty at the Institute of Adult Education at Chung-Cheng National University has met with concerned residents, participated in discussions at community meetings, and assisted community volunteers in designing strategies to clean up and recycle rubbish. Volunteers meet in one of the resident's homes for community discussions and planning. They have encouraged all members of the neighbourhood to recycle paper, glass, plastics, and other rubbish. The city sanitation department has located a space within the neighbourhood for a recycling centre, a clean site with 15 different receptacles for recyclable items, that is accessible to all residents. Also, the city has identified a building lot where the community can construct their community centre when they have acquired enough funding. In the interim, the building lot has been cleared and residents have planted flower and vegetable gardens. The gardens are near the recycling centre so neighbours can drop off recyclable items, work on their garden, and discuss community activities. This site is very busy during the evenings and on weekends when people have time off from their work and other responsibilities.
   Sustainability
   A grassroots community organisation has emerged from neighbours, volunteers, and residents talking about rubbish. The group has established a tradition of talking about local issues, engaged the City as a partner in recycling, and utilised other resources such as the Institute for Adult Education in assisting them to improve their community. The establishment of a recycling centre next to their community centre building lot, currently used for a flower and vegetable garden, has facilitated networking within the neighbourhood. There is a tendency toward sustainability as the grassroots organisation accomplishes each project.

Summary

We have presented examples of sustainable models of community development from different cultures. Despite differences in culture, languages, and ethnicity, some common elements can be drawn from these examples. One of these elements is the engagement of local people in making decisions about changes in their communities. This can be seen in examples 3, 4, 5, 7, 8 and 9. This can happen spontaneously as people begin to talk about mutual concerns, and sometimes existing community groups will call on an outside facilitator to enable this kind of conversation. For example, several communities decided they needed to promote their region as a tourist site, such as examples 3, 5, 8 and 9.

It is important to seek and honour the opinions of diverse members of the community and people we interviewed indicated that this was essential to the success of community endeavours. Time was taken to listen to diverse views in examples 7, 8, 9 and 10.

A second feature is residents sharing their ideas with others and seeking help from government agencies and non-government agencies for information and practical assistance, such as in examples 6, 11a and 11b.

Some of the examples illustrate that as communities learned more they began to develop concrete plans and work together to act on them so that as in examples 7 and 10, community actions produced tangible results such as building a meeting facility, or contracting for a web page as in examples 8 and 9.

Some communities worked with outside funding, as in examples 2 and 5, while others had no outside sources of money and generated the funds they needed by accepting local support and donations (examples 7, 8, and 9).

People deciding to take time to listen to the diverse voices of community members and residents and specify actions that are under local control, have initiated sustainable community development efforts.

CHAPTER 14
A group action learning model for sustainable rural community development: Reflections on an Indonesian case

A Muktasam and S Chamala

The Indonesian Rural Community Development Program was put into practice in the 1960s when the General Education Program (Bimas or Mass Guidance Program) was introduced to increase agricultural production. In the late 1970s, the government introduced a group approach for rural community development. Since then, many types and numbers of groups have been established. These include farmer groups, mass media study groups, water user associations, cattle-fattening groups, and poverty groups. In 1997, in West Nusa Tenggara province, for example, about 12 000 farmer-related groups were identified. However, the Indonesian Rural Community Development Program used these groups within the frame of a transfer of technology model. As a result most groups failed to promote community learning. This chapter examines how action learning takes place within groups, how the modified participatory action research (MPAR) methodology stimulated the action learning process in groups and service agencies, and implications for regional sustainability.

Introduction

Rural community development was put into practice in the 1960s when the government introduced the General Education Program to increase rice production. This era of Indonesian green revolution had a significant impact on rice production. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, the government introduced a group approach to support the *Insus* program (a special intensification program focused on intra-group cooperation and five recommended agricultural technologies). As a result, in 1984/1985 the government succeeded in achieving sufficient rice production. After 1985, rice production levelled off and in 1987/1988, the government launched another program called the *Supra Insus* program (focusing on intra- and inter-group cooperation to implement ten technical innovations).

The group approach is also used in other areas of rural development such as in health, information, family planning, small industries, forestry, poverty alleviation, religion, and women's development. Consequently, many types and large numbers of groups have been established such as mass media study groups, water user associations, cattle fattening groups, small farmer groups, small industry groups, family planning groups, and youth Muslim groups. In 1994, through the poverty alleviation program, the government introduced another type of group called *Kelompok Masyarakat*, which literally means *community group* (poverty group is used in this paper to differentiate from the general term community group).

Most research has focused on the adoption of technical innovation, while research on how these groups promote community learning (group members and wider community members gain knowledge, skills, and change their attitude) has been neglected. Research has found that most groups have not contributed much to community learning (Adisoewignyo 1998). The groups mostly exist to participate and capture prizes in government-sponsored group and village competitions, or for policy implementation.

The focus of this chapter is to discuss how the group approach promotes community learning for rural community development. The effect of the modified participatory action research method on the groups, community, and organisation learning (organisation learning refers to the learning process that takes place within the service agencies) is also discussed. Implications for regional sustainability are presented, followed by conclusions.

Sustainable rural development: From 'teaching the community' to 'community and organisational learning'

The transfer of technology (TOT) approach dominates rural development practices in Indonesia where *teaching/mass education* is the main process. Van den Ban and Hawkins (1996) use the phrase *development and diffusion strategy* to explain this approach. The research and development institutions develop technologies which are then transferred to the rural community through extension institutions. Accumulated experience with this approach has developed the community perception that the instrument of development is technology. As a result, the rural community has become dependent and the development process is less sustainable. Rural community development failures due to this approach have been widely discussed (Rahim & Jayalakshmi 1996; Rouse 1995). Learning from this experience, participatory approaches are increasingly recognised (Chamala & Keith 1995).

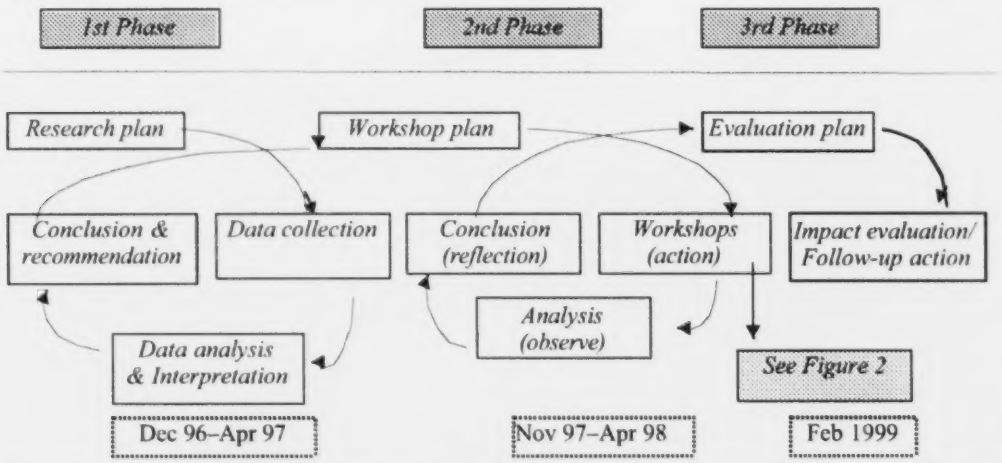
In Indonesian rural community development, groups are considered to be community participation units that also promote community learning. A wide variety and large numbers of groups have been established in every Indonesian village. The strategic role of groups in promoting effective community learning has been widely discussed (Millar & Curtis 1997; Hamilton 1995). Millar and Curtis (1997) concluded that effective group learning could be achieved if the four critical factors in group learning are present. These factors are group autonomy, use of experience and integrated information, effective facilitation, ongoing relationships and learning opportunities. Exchange of information and experience amongst the group members would enrich their learning experience.

Chamala's model of group effectiveness shows that effective group learning processes are also affected by other factors such as service agency and community factors (Chamala 1995). Muktasam and Chamala (1998) found that most groups failed to promote effective learning processes due to ineffective approaches taken by the service agencies. Organisation learning disabilities (Senge 1992) were also found in the study. If rural development is perceived as a system, then effective and sustainable rural development requires effective learning processes at both community and organisation level (see Figure 2 later in the chapter).

Methodology

A modified participatory action research (MPAR) method was used in this study. The term 'modified' refers to the fact that the method was not purely participatory action research (PAR) because the community and other stakeholders were not involved in the early phase of the study. It is a combination of a snapshot survey and PAR where three phases of fieldwork were conducted (Figure 1). The first phase of fieldwork (Dec 96–Apr 97) was carried out to collect data from groups, group members, field agents, and other government staff, while the second phase of fieldwork was carried out (Nov 97–Apr 98) to bring the tentative results to the groups and related stakeholders for confirmation and to gain further insight on various issues. Six series of workshops were carried out in this phase.

Figure 1: A modified participatory action research method



Another objective of this phase was to use the research findings for helping groups and organisations through action learning processes.

Participatory workshops were used to achieve these objectives. Participants were encouraged to reflect on group problems, find solutions, and develop realistic action plans. Brainstorming, SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) analysis, small group and plenary discussions were used to facilitate the workshops. The researchers took facilitation roles and bridged the different level workshops to promote information flow from groups to field extension staff and policymakers at the provincial level (Figure 2).

Group workshop results were presented at the field agent workshop, and these workshop results were presented at the district and provincial level workshop involving policy-makers and other stakeholders from related agencies.

Results and discussion

Group role performance and associated factors

Most groups failed to perform their expected roles. Six out of the nine groups under the study showed no activity. One hundred per cent of the members of the water user associations and the mass media study groups, for example, perceived that their groups have not played any role.

This study confirmed that the agency approaches to the groups have contributed to the group failure. These approaches such as top-down, targeting, incentive (misused), and parallel approach (lead to lack of inter-agency coordination) have also had further impacts on groups' characteristics—leadership, membership, composition, cohesion, rules and environment—as well as group members' perceptions of the group's roles, tasks, and development program in general.

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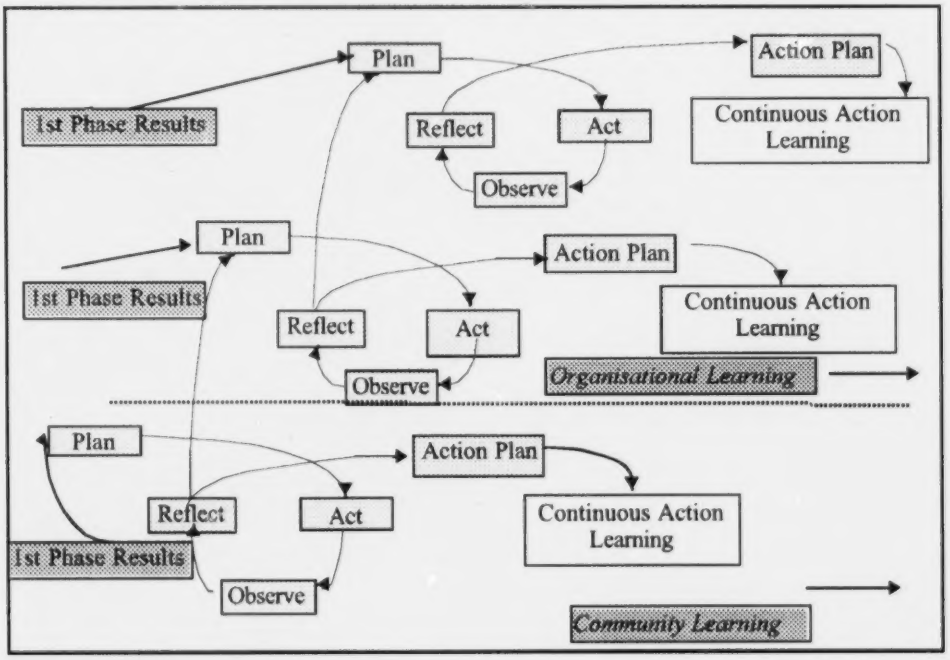
Figure 2: Workshop series used to promote community and organisational learning



Do the groups learn from their actions?

Action learning processes did not occur in most of the investigated groups, for example, the mass media study groups, water user associations, and the farmer group, and most of these groups performed no voluntary action. However, limited action, which was promoted by government staff, was identified in the water user associations. The groups did not have a culture of reflection on inaction. Reflecting on why there was inaction could help them to search for reasons for their inaction and act as a trigger for action.

Less formal group action learning was only found in the more active groups—one farmer group and two cattle-fattening groups. This modified participatory action research helped to formalise the action learning process, particularly in the farmer group. Figure 3 shows a one-year formalised group action learning model found in the study. This figure shows how the group learned from its action.

Another less formal group action learning process was found in both cattle-fattening groups, where the group members met at their meeting place and discussed the group's issues.

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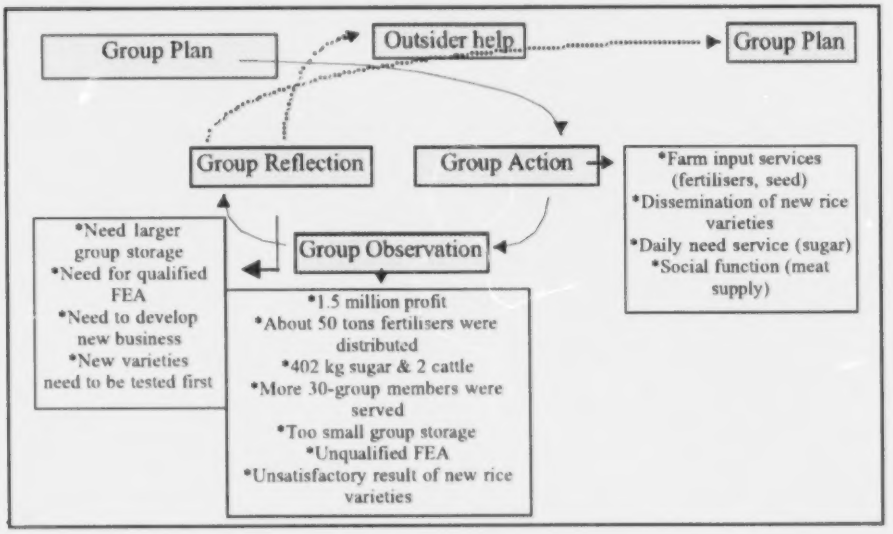
Figure 3: A one-year formalised group action learning model found in a successful group



Impacts of this modified participatory action research on community and organisational learning

This study found that the groups' and agencies' learning processes could be revitalised through group workshops and organisational workshops. Learning outcomes generated in the group and agency workshops indicate that the learning processes have taken place within the groups and the service agencies. They learned by sharing their ideas on factors associated with groups' failure, developing solutions and action plans.

Moreover, the learning processes within the service agencies were enriched through this approach. In addition to the first phase findings presented by the researcher in the workshop, the learning outcomes generated in the group workshops were also another learning source for the service agencies (Figure 2). The approach helps to communicate group learning outcomes to service agencies at different levels. Learning/communication processes used to be top-down, but these sequential workshops activated bottom-up processes—learning from the field experiences. Publishing the workshop activities and results twice in the local newspaper made this learning process more transparent and put pressure on various stakeholders to act.

Under the conventional social research methods such as a snapshot survey and case study, these community and organisational learning processes are often neglected.

Barriers to community and organisational learning

ORGANISATION AND COMMUNITY'S CULTURE

Even though MPAR has indirectly triggered action learning within these groups as well as

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within the organisation, this study also found several barriers to sustaining the action learning process. Organisational learning disability was identified through the study. At the field agent level for example, they tended not to understand and report the real issues of working with groups. Field extension agents requested the researcher not to bring several issues identified during the workshop, such as duty overload and achieving target, to the attention of the management fearing personal reprisal.

The rural development agent also showed a similar learning disability when he said, 'We know that most of the poverty groups are not active and members could not repay the credit, but our boss wants to see the success. Therefore, we developed a 'successful' report'. The district staff of the Rural Development office also expressed this learning disability as, 'We know that in the field most groups are not active and misused the credit, but we don't care about this fact. We just want to report whatever our field staff reported to us'.

This learning disability is likely to be sustained as long as the evaluation standard applied to field agent promotion is based on their target achievement (predetermined quantity and dateline). The 'success' in achieving the target means that the field agents gained more, and better credit points, from their boss.

On the other hand, community dependency has developed as a community culture. Group and organisation learning outcomes revealed that community activities (learning) were dependent on the field agent's initiative, while the incentive approach had been used to attract the community.

Lack of knowledge and skill in group management

Outcomes of the group and field agent workshops indicate a lack of knowledge and skills in group management. This problem is likely to hinder the continuity of group and organisational learning processes.

Lack of commitment for community empowerment

Issues of concern raised by the field agents and policymakers highlighted the poor commitment of government staff to work with groups. They treated the group mostly as an object and instrument for development. This implied that organisational support for effective community learning would not be favourable.

Alternative solutions to address the learning barriers

In accordance with the identified learning barriers, the groups as well as the organisation learning outcomes, clearly show the solutions. At the organisational level, the field agents suggested the need for government will to implement development policies and programs. This solution would address the organisation's and community's learning barrier. This solution would also promote a stronger commitment from government staff to encourage effective community learning.

Training in group management is another proposed solution to address community and organisation learning. Reflection at both community and organisation levels demonstrates their lack of knowledge and skills in group management.

Community leader training is essential to mobilise local human and financial resources and to work closely with other stakeholders. The leaders need to develop a 'win-win' approach as it can help them to get away from dependency to interdependency and empowerment.

Implications for regional sustainability

The study indicates that action learning processes practised by the community groups and by the agencies would strategically contribute to regional sustainability. This study highlights that regional sustainability could be achieved when:

- Continuous action learning takes place within community groups and agencies (horizontal action learning circle), which would lead to the improvement of their role performance.
- Continuous top-down and bottom-up action learning processes (vertical action learning circle) are sustained. Groups and development agencies should learn from their own field experiences and other external resources.
- Other sub-systems are in favour of supporting community groups' and agencies' learning processes. Community groups and agencies are the only two sub-systems of a whole system of regional sustainability.
- Genuine people participation exists in the development and learning processes. Effective participation would lead to better groups' and agencies' performance, which in turn would contribute to regional sustainability.

Conclusions

The results of this study indicate that most groups failed to perform their expected roles. Six major factors affected group performance, namely top-down dominance, targeting approach, misuse of incentive, absence of issues, parallel approach and lack of coordination, and misperception of the group roles and development program.

Less formal action learning processes took place in the successful groups, which were not found in the less successful groups. The MPAR has revitalised action learning processes in the successful groups and stimulated the action learning process in the less successful groups. It has also indirectly promoted organisational learning through which field extension agents and policymakers learned to identify why groups fail and what should be done.

Barriers to community and organisational learning were identified in this study, and suggestions made to improve group, community, and organisation learning. In particular, it was found that activating bottom-up learning—learning from the field—reduces learning disabilities. Overall findings suggest that continuous community and organisational learning—through horizontal and vertical action learning processes—is likely to lead to sustainable rural community (regional) development.

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CHAPTER 15
Enabling communities through the arts: Case studies from the Community Cultural Development Fund of the Australia Council

Onko Kingma

The arts have the potential to encourage creativity, inclusiveness, empowerment and trust in communities—all elements of social capital. Community cultural development (CCD) is a process which fosters the arts as not only a creative occupation in its own right but also as a vehicle for uniting and enabling communities. CCD is therefore an important tool to bring about change in rural Australia. This chapter uses case study projects to illustrate the inherent potential in CCD processes to overcome inertia in communities. The Community Cultural Development Fund (CCDF) provides funding for activities where communities take an active role in artistic collaborations with professional artists. Communities are encouraged to create and manage arts projects which help them express their culture. The creation of contemporary art works in turn provides the community with a focus for finding solutions to wider issues. The case studies range across topics such as domestic violence, youth, the role of women in building social capital, art in public places, Indigenous and multicultural issues, creation of learning environments, equity and diversity, as well as creation of inspired art. The processes required to ensure successful outcomes are outlined and in each case, these can be shown to be consistent with the requirements for a learning culture.

Introduction

Community Cultural Development, by using the creative capacity of individuals and groups through the arts, provides an important vehicle and process for uniting and enabling communities, and for generating sustained innovation and social capital. This chapter uses, as an example of this, eight case study projects funded by the Community Cultural Development Fund, which illustrate the potential of the arts to help bring about learning communities.

The arts in learning communities

Earlier chapters of this book have defined social capital as the relationships, networks, norms of behaviour, trust, and the bonding, bridging and linking ties involved in working together, facilitating interaction and exchange and sustaining communities. As noted by the Australia Council (1999), Madden (2000) and Dunn (2000), CCD activities may act to conserve, increase or develop social capital by extending networks, expanding community horizons, improving wellbeing and facilitating change. CCD activities impact on artistic capital by expanding engagement in artistic activity and changing the quality of the artistic capital stock. Artistic activity not only contributes to relationship building at all levels in the community but also may encourage participation of people and organisations, increase arts appreciation and help with the process of building audiences. CCD projects invariably change the quality of artistic expression and provide the vehicle for development of artistic (human) capital in the community.

The Australia Council (2000a, p. 4) describes CCD as:

> [A] process rather than an artform [spanning] theatre, music, visual arts, multimedia, dance, writing, design and many other forms of cultural expression. CCD encompasses a range of ideas and practices which involve communities with the arts. As well as producing excellent art, CCD activities lead to other outcomes: new community relationships are born; existing relationships and identities strengthened; community discussion stimulated; ideas exchanged; partnerships created; and social isolation diminished. Sharing ownership of arts projects in the community challenges and stimulates artists as it provides fertile ground for the growth of new ways of working and interaction between cultures and sub-cultures.

In this context, the performing and creative arts have the potential to assist in bringing in new cultures and overcoming problems of exclusion and alienation which arise in market economies (see Chapters 1, 2 and 3 of this book). The arts provide not only a basis for creative activity but also for moving beyond economic efficiency to broader concepts of productivity. The arts are a vehicle for not only communicating about change but also for delivering change (Australia Council 2000b, 1999). In addition, they also have further direct and indirect economic benefits—they are labour intensive, significantly increase the satisfaction of employment, are environmentally responsible and tend to have high multiplier effects. The arts also have the potential to provide the bridge from narrow profit-based activity under economic growth policies, to socially useful activities which fulfil the goal of freedom. As such, they help to unite communities and create social capital (Dunn 2000; Australia Council 1999).

Borghino (2000) has identified from the 1996 Census, that some 156 700 Australians or two per cent of the workforce of 7.6 million, were involved in full-time culture/leisure activities in 1996. Only half of these were arts professionals. The number of full-time artists and arts professionals tripled from 26 400 in 1976 to 80 000 in 1996. This represents an annual growth rate of 4.5 per cent, compared with 2.4 per cent annual growth in Australia's employed workforce. Over the period 1991 to 1996, the number of artists and arts professionals grew by 20 per cent or over five per cent annually compared with 1.1 per cent for the overall workforce. In addition to the 80 000 directly involved in the arts, Borghino (2000) reports a further 35 700 people are closely associated with the arts. However, these figures include all art forms, as well as categories such as architects, librarians, and teachers of various types. The balance of the 156 700 are different types of support workers.

Madden (2000) has reported similar statistics from different sources which indicate that in 1993, there were around 43 000 artists employed in Australia, with only around 10 per cent of these or around 4000 being 'community artists'. Even taking into account the growth (noted above) reported by Borghino (2000), it would appear that an extraordinarily small percentage of the Australian workforce is engaged in CCD. It may also be concluded from the above that there is considerable potential for expansion of this sector of the economy.

Community cultural development practice

The Community Cultural Development Fund of the Australia Council provides funding for activities where communities take an active role in artistic collaborations with professional artists. Communities are encouraged to create and manage arts projects which help them express, develop or reclaim their culture. Such projects enable communities and help them

to address concerns through the creation of contemporary art works which demonstrate solutions to issues (Dunn 2000; Australia Council 1999).

Since the mid-1970s when the CCDF (then named the Community Arts Board) was first introduced, the focus of the now CCDF has changed from encouragement of experiential community art by 'taking the arts to the community', to the development of collaborative approaches to communities engaged in creative processes. The early agenda was about wider participation in the arts and quality of the arts experience. Goals of diversity, independence of the arts community, and cultural development, were gradually added and, by the early 1990s, equity issues, learning, information provision, marketing, and planning had become important. Emphasis is on communities taking control of their cultural direction and development, and creating an environment within which the arts can flourish. Projects which give expression to these goals invariably work to enhance social capital in communities. National perspectives, cultural expression, acceptance and promotion of the arts in the community, sustainability of arts practice, and the encouragement of outstanding achievement, are also important CCDF goals.

Case study projects

The eight case studies presented below represent a sample of the work being undertaken by these and many other CCD practitioners around the country. They have been drawn from the programs of the CCDF, to illustrate the value of CCD in generating change at not only the local level but also nationally and even internationally. Invariably such projects involve partnerships with other funding bodies, and also, significant in-kind support at the local level, and much personal sacrifice and volunteer effort without market remuneration.

The sample projects demonstrate the breadth of influence and importance of this work. They include: creation of new artistic work with public outcomes; staging of performances and exposure of this work to wider audiences; enhancement of the skills and creativity of community members by developing ideas, creating contacts and laying the foundation for future work; skilling and learning; promotion, marketing and planning; enhancing the role of women in creating social capital; exploring Indigenous and multicultural issues; youth; the aged; creation of partnerships which enable CCD organisations, artists and business to access resources and opportunities; creating the environmment for collaborative work to plan and design public environments and so on. All projects have generated wider and longer-term activity in their communities and contributed to sustainability of the arts.

Big hART Incorporated and *D Faces* address issues in youth, the disadvantaged and health and show how non-profit arts organisations can collaborate with communities to set in place inclusive processes through which communities can develop their own art and tackle social issues. The potential for women and leadership is addressed in *Uniting Rural Communities* and *Pink Palace* through good practice in community processes and use of the arts as a vehicle for skilling women in not only creative work but also organisational and planning activities. *Pink Palace* and *Bloodwood Tree* address Indigenous and multicultural issues, remoteness, and skills development by encouraging local artists to participate in broader community activities. Here, the arts provide a vehicle to break down barriers and create a supportive and inclusive environment across the community. *Northern Exposure*, *River of Life* and *Interlocks* focus on partnerships, remoteness and planning and use the arts to bring together a wide range of interest groups and promote cultural and environmental values.

Big hART

Big hART Incorporated is a non-profit arts organisation that collaborates with communities, groups, and individuals to produce art with people experiencing the effects of marginalisation in rural, regional, and remote areas. Organisations such as these and, for example, 'Connexions', a partnership between the Jesuit Social Services, and philanthropic and community organisations (Jesuit Social Services pers. comm. 2000), are good examples of the sort of partnerships and alliances now emerging and which work well in the arts. Three projects have been chosen here to illustrate the power of such catalytic organisations to create social capital and to show how social issues can be tackled through the arts.

On the west coast of Tasmania, 'SLR 5000' a short play based on violence in the home as experienced by young people in the area was produced following initial research, workshops and consultations. Seventy disadvantaged youth were involved in an ongoing workshop program; 800 people attending the performances. A positive youth profile was generated in the media. Through high profile TV coverage, the youth messages were heard well beyond the local region.

In Illawarra, New South Wales, a similar process created 'Paper Scissors, Rock, Cereal per 30 gm Serve', a production on domestic violence, involving similar numbers of young people. A much larger audience (90 000) was able to see positive youth profiles through good media coverage. The Illawara program was included on an ABC program titled *Coloured Inn* which helped to re-engage the young people into their own community.

In the Riverina, New South Wales, young people worked with Big hART on a performance piece to highlight prevention of youth suicide and to increase the awareness of the use of Life Line by young people at risk, as part of a National Youth Suicide Prevention Program. Two thousand young people attended workshops with 1800 from 17 schools attending school performances of 'Pandora's Shed'. The play on self-harm was also used by the Upper Murray Health Department for the opening of the Medical Health Conference in Albury. Further presentations are planned for the future.

Pink Palace

In 1999, the Julalikari Council Aboriginal Corporation in the remote town of Tennant Creek, Northern Territory, hosted three artists to work with the Julalikari Arts and Crafts Program locally known as the Pink Palace. The Palace encourages local artists to develop their skills and experience whilst increasing opportunities to exhibit and sell their work throughout Australia.

Six-week residencies were developed in response to requests by artists for more interaction with their colleagues, and the opportunity to extend their skills and knowledge base. The community identified the need for experimentation and identity. The residencies were developed as partnerships and the project became a learning experience for the community. As with most regional arts projects, an holistic approach was adopted with the creative work embedded within the community.

The work has built the confidence of the artists at the Pink Palace. Their work has moved from preconceived ideas of what others might want, to development of new approaches to art and craft, networking, communication skills, and commercial expertise in new markets. Skills are being shared and people in other remote areas are interested in learning about the

project. The Julalikari women have been asked to participate in broader community projects e.g. hospital, police, and to give artist talks. Two artists had their work selected for exhibition at the Adelaide Festival and contacts have been made with other art centres. The local police have commissioned Julalikari Arts and Crafts to design and paint four murals in the police cell as part of an initiative to assist relations between police and the Aboriginal community.

River of Life

The River of Life project encouraged an exploration of the relationship between the communities of Cooktown and the Endeavour River in Queensland, by involving community members in the design process leading to a walkway along the river foreshore, with storylines imprinted in ceramic path tiles. Such physical public spaces are used in different ways and given different significance by different people. Determining the designs involved, negotiations, problem-solving, and respect for the contributions of others. People learned how to participate in an arts process and ultimately, these skills have remained and strengthened community relationships.

The project fostered local pride and cultural identity through artistic collaboration and development and encouraged reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous cultural groups. The development of the project involved extensive community consultation utilising a range of methods to target different sectors and interest groups within the township. Through resulting collaborations, people from various cultural backgrounds were able to express their ideas and ties to the Endeavour River and in doing so, strengthened community spirit and increased awareness of associated environmental and heritage issues.

The project has snowballed since completion. For example, the work has been promoted through conference presentations; the launch will be part of the Cooktown Australia Day celebrations, 2001; there is strong support from local Aboriginal communities, which will lead to a 12-month training program and establishment of a studio pottery in one of the communities; and the project has been nominated for the Australian Institute of Management Awards for project management.

Bloodwood Tree

A new festival, the Nindji Nindji Family Cultural Festival ®, was recently held in Port Hedland, Western Australia, with the aim of bringing the Pilbara community together in a celebration of cultural diversity and Aboriginal culture. The organiser, Bloodwood Tree Association, has a long history of working with communities. It is an incorporated Aboriginal organisation providing services for homeless and alcohol affected people and working across the areas of health, employment, and education to bring people together and help families. Port Hedland in Western Australia, is the major town within the area and a central location for Western Desert communities.

Cultural and other interest groups contributed ideas and guidance on how best to present the varying cultures. Through telling their stories in different languages, members of the community were able to better understand that they all have experiences in common and so were able to share their culture and art in ways not previously possible. Audiences for the Festival performances were substantial and it was the first time that those involved in an Indigenous festival in the Pilbara had invited people from other cultures to participate in their celebrations. This proved to be a positive step for the reconcialition process.

The local community supported the Festival through provision of patrol officers, supervision of children's activities, provision of tents and shelters, fencing, safety and security, and other in-kind support. The community has continued this support in a variety of ways since the Festival.

What made this Festival unique was that the initial concept came from an organisation not associated with the arts and festivals, and that it was an Aboriginal organisation which brought together the rest of the community. Bloodwood Tree recognised the advantages of using the arts to break down barriers and while the festival itself attracted considerable support and audiences, it was the process of planning and developing the festival that has established long term benefits within the community.

D Faces

'From Boys to Men' was a youth theatre production involving a broad cross section of community members and groups to explore personal and social development for young men in rural Australia. Such issues are often ignored in regional communities for fear this focus might promote insecurity and disempower and reduce the status of men.

D Faces of Youth Arts Inc developed the project in collaboration with professional artists and local health workers. Potential strategic partners were identified through research and consultations with local agencies. The project workers undertook a training program to ensure they understood the situation of people at risk of domestic violence. Health workers provided material which was used as the foundation of the performance content and direction. A 'Boys Talk' workshops program was conducted in high schools, which offered a safe environment in which discussion on issues dealing with violence, communication, and masculinity could take place.

Young men from Whyalla in South Australia who had no prior experience in performance continued after the initial consultations, to become a part of the final artistic outcome. The theatre production involved both audiences and participants in debate on the rites of passage for young men in rural areas. This provoked community members to address their own personal development and that of their family, friends and siblings. Young men and women were then able to forge their own passage into domestic and social harmony in a safe and supportive environment.

The accessibility and recruitment process of the project attracted a greater number of young men than was initially expected. The workshop program introduced them and their audience to new forms of artistic expression in which they could discover, explore and analyse the issues and changing attitudes. This began a process of breaking down the stereotypes faced by local men. Many participants have continued with other D Faces projects.

Interlocks

The Interlocks project operated in the Riverland during 1998 as part of a Waterworks program in South Australia. Five artistic installations were developed at five lock sites on the Murray River. Artists involved in fabric art and design, basket weaving, photography and sculpture, worked with local communities across a range of cultures. Those involved with organisation of the project learned new management skills and many who had not previously had experience in art production, were able to explore new forms of creative

expression alongside professional artists. Messages depicted in the art installations centered on the waterways and relationships between local communities and the river.

The river management staff took an active interest in the project and provided assistance and information. New partnerships were forged, such as, for example, between The River Murray Catchment Water Management Board, SA Water, Riverland Schools, three Local Councils, and the Aboriginal TAFE studies. Four hundred school children took part in Water Week, with many continuing to participate in the workshops and celebrations.

The project succeeded at several levels. Through extensive publicity and the greater participation from the non-arts sector, there has been a shift in community perception of the roles that arts and community cultural development can play in the wider community. There has been a noticeable raising of consciousness about river health and constructive debate about possible solutions. The Riverland, South Australia, now has a series of functional sculptures at five lock sites, and the photographic works have been published and viewed nationally, thus taking the messages and images to a greater audience. The silk screens have now become a portable celebration tool for Riverland community events. Many of the participants and students have continued and extended their artistic practice. For example, a group of fourteen artists has developed a touring exhibition as a direct result of the Interlocks project, and some Aboriginal people are exhibiting a new range of basket work inspired by the workshops.

Northern Exposure

In 'Northern Exposure', a part-time CCD officer was employed at the Geraldton Regional Art Gallery, Western Australia, to support and develop rich and diverse arts activity within the region. The officer has worked closely with community groups, local government representatives and individual artists.

Activities undertaken during the 12-month project have been varied. The Streetwork youth program was linked to the Gallery through a project involving a local Aboriginal artist working with the Streetwork project, to create an exhibition which was exhibited in the gallery foyer area. A project with the Yanna Yanna Women's Group resulted in a banner carrying positive messages for young people which was carried in the annual NAIDOC week street parade. Programs offered by the Geraldton Police and Citizens Youth Club were broadened after a street art project was introduced, offering young people skills and involvement in a range of artforms and the painting of a mural.

Six Aboriginal communities were part of an intensive arts workshop program, presented by the Marra Aboriginal Corporation. These workshops created employment for local artists and have given people in isolated communities access to arts experiences. The artworks from the workshops were exhibited in the Geraldton Regional Art Gallery. A textile project with women across the mid-west region was a celebration of the Centenary of Women's suffrage and focused on the history and achievements of women in the region.

The appointment of a CCD officer to encourage and support communities through creative processes has seen many positive outcomes for the Gallery, the region, and the separate communities. Awareness of the Regional Art Gallery has resulted in increased access and audiences. Private business sponsorship has been secured to establish a gallery, workshop and office for local artists in Geraldton Mall, and a successful funding application has

enabled the Mara Aboriginal Corporation to continue the arts program and prepare for an exhibition ' Bush Talkin'. Geraldton is now more widely recognised as the cultural centre of the mid-west in Western Australia. Professional networks have been established and existing ones strengthened through this project. The recently formed Cultural Advisory Committee is promoting the value of CCD practice in all facets of local government and across the community, and is implementing a three-year program of activities for the community.

Uniting Rural Communities

This project was organised by the Foundation for Australian Agricultural Women (FAAW) based in Victoria, to help provide Australian rural women with transferable skills which would enhance their lives and confidence, and in turn benefit their communities. By focusing on arts projects, women were able to develop life, management and networking skills, working together in a non-threatening way to produce an artwork. The project involved: workshops on business, leadership and communication skills; development of the artistic activities and processes and a final workshop and celebration day which validated the women's accomplishments. The importance of accessibility and encouragement was recognised and child minding, location, and refreshments were all part of the planning.

New skills were put into practice as the women decided on a project, an artist(s) and the practical issues to be considered in implementing their ideas. In Queensland the Milla Milla group made a life-size fibreglass sculpture of a cow family while at Herberton the women produced a community seat. Also in Queensland, the Mt Garnet group decided on a bus shelter; in Malanda a mosaic; while the Yungaburra women worked on a tapestry. In Victoria, the Maffra group made a table and seats for the town and seats for the outlying areas while the Orbost group, created mosaic paths and carved wooden animals in civic settings. Also in Victoria, Omeo women produced a documentary exploring the past, present and future while women at Bairnsdale developed and staged the 'Snakes and Ladders' Roadshow.

An exhibition of the artwork developed through and following this project was part of the 'Salute from Australia' at the Second International Women in Agriculture Conference in the United States in 1998. The title 'Moving the Posts', illustrated the diversity and achievement of contemporary Australians involved in all aspects of agriculture.

While all participants learned new practical and artistic skills, possibly the most important has been networking and developing new relationships. As a direct result of the project some women have commenced higher education, and many found the confidence to return to the workforce. Others have started their own small businesses, sent off literary works to publishers, and formed cooperatives. Women in the project areas have demonstrated a new confidence in tackling community issues. The project has become known as 'the project with a thousand outcomes'.

The arts as a driver of change

The above case studies show the important role the arts can play in helping communities to become empowered and work together in harmony. This is not a 'one-off' result. Similar conclusions can be found in the presentations at, and documented case studies from, the recent CCD conferences (see Dunn 2000; Australia Council 1999). The potential of such

projects to drive change and create an inclusive environment with multiple positive outcomes should not be underestimated.

More broadly, the case studies here and in Dunn (2000) provide some insight into ways the arts can help to achieve a better balance between materialism and creativity and in creating a way forward for communities. The arts are highly effective in building trust, confidence, and achievement at all levels. They have the potential to engender close relationships, local ownership, respect, and a willingness to become involved, in the wider community. These are essential components of social capital, as well as a prerequisite for smoothly functioning local economies.

All projects had extensive multiplier effects into their regional communities. Notable in this context are Northern Exposure, Interlocks, Rivers of Life, Pink Palace and Uniting Rural Communities. These multiplier effects, because they embody the attributes and quality of networks associated with artistic endeavour, tend also to have a positive impact on business enterprise—they embody social capital and work to enhance productivity within economic activity.

All projects are having a longer-lasting beneficial impact on communities in and beyond their localities. This has been so whether the focus has been on people as in Big hART, D Faces and Northern Exposure, or on more permanent fixtures such as in River of Life, and Interlocks.

In all cases, holistic and integrative approaches were adopted which not only brought the arts into strategic planning processes in the community, but facilitated community consideration of social, Indigenous, multicultural, and equity issues. Pink Palace and Bloodwood Tree are good examples of this. Recognition of the power of women to build social capital was a specific part of most projects and particularly, Pink Palace and Uniting Rural Communities. These and other projects have been able to address the leadership potential of women—a role many women have not taken in the past. Other projects were able to show that exploration of single issues such as, for example, youth (D Faces and Big hART) or issues concerning the mixing of different cultures (Interlocks, Bloodwood Tree), can lead to wider community processes for change.

In the case studies, the arts were not only the focus of valid activity in their own right. The arts also provided the vehicle for improving strategic planning and communication activities. This tended to happen whether the arts medium was visual (Pink Palace) or performance based (D Faces, Big hART). In all projects, catalytic mechanisms were used to achieve successful outcomes. In four projects, organisations interested in the arts and invariably not profit based, took responsibility for project development, management and communications. Organising committees were involved in three projects while for Northern Exposure, a CCD officer provided the catalyst. The arts-focus of these catalytic agents provided a quality to the project management which helped build an environment within which the unachievable was possible. Leadership and commitment expressed through such catalytic agents is an important part of community-based processes for change. Consultation and communication processes were highly effective and developed naturally.

The Australia Council (2000b) Report notes the enormous potential within the Australian public to influence expansion of the arts given appropriate information, encouragement and

opportunities for involvement. The Report also notes the potential for education or a learning culture to promote the value of the arts to the general population. In addition, as noted earlier, any expansion in the arts in Australia will be from a very small base. As reported by Madden (2000), only around one per cent of the workforce or less than 100 000 people are employed as arts professionals. Of these, less than 50 000 are employed as artists, and only around 4000 are employed as community artists. Taken together, these observations and figures would seem to point to an enormous potential for expansion of arts-based and particularly CCD activities. If, as argued above, the arts contribute significantly to social capital and if expansion of social capital is a vital ingredient in any strategy for recovery in rural Australia, then encouragement of public and private investment in CCD could have a major net payoff to the Australian economy. Some issues in achieving a larger and sustainable CCD sector were discussed at the recent CCD conferences (Dunn 2000; Australia Council 1999).

Acknowledgement

The author would like to thank the staff at the Australia Council and in particular, Bernice Gerrand, Andrew Donovan and Gareth Wreford of the Community Cultural Development Fund, for their enthusiasm and help with the case study material. I am also indebted to the people involved with each of the case study projects—I have drawn on their documentation of their projects and benefited from their insights into the CCD process in their communities. I would also like to thank the people in the communities involved in the projects, for permission to use the case study material in the above context. Again, my appreciation goes to Bernice Gerrand for facilitating the work and for her valuable comments.

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CHAPTER 16
Community strategies: Addressing the challenges for young people living in rural Australia

Johanna Wyn and Helen Stokes

'Getting a life' is a challenging process for all young Australians. Young people growing up in rural areas and isolated areas face particular challenges because structural change to the rural economy has dramatically affected the very fabric of their communities. Recent research on the health and wellbeing of young people in rural communities reveals that there are recurring themes, despite the wide variations across rural communities. Commonly identified challenges in young people's lives are the lack of access to transport, accommodation, education, and training opportunities. Social isolation and social division are important factors. Negotiating gender relations and sexuality are also significant themes, and researchers are increasingly seeking to answer questions about the relationship of these issues to suicide. This chapter is about the barriers to health, wellbeing and participation which face young people in rural Australia, and the responses by rural communities to these issues.

Introduction

Our discussion focuses on the strategies that are being developed in rural communities to address the needs of their young people. It draws on the findings of recent research projects undertaken by the Youth Research Centre on young people in rural Australia (Wyn, Stokes & Stafford 1998) and on the processes which inform different types of inter-agency collaboration (Stokes & Tyler 1997). These projects involved an extensive review of the literature and focus group interviews with young people and youth workers in rural communities. In this work we identified key issues and challenges which face young people in rural Australia, the effects of which are reflected in rates of youth suicide, high unemployment, lower rates of educational participation, and lack of access to health services. Our research found that, despite the difficulties they face, many young people nonetheless place a high value on the positive aspects of rural life, including a feeling of belonging, access to the environment, and a commitment to self-sufficiency.

Many communities are actively engaged in the process of meeting the challenges of rural restructuring and changes to the economy. We focus on the ways in which communities are acknowledging and addressing young people's needs. There is increasing interest in documenting strategies and identifying their successful elements and processes. The active involvement of young people in shaping community responses is a key element. Collaboration between agencies to enhance their service provision to young people is also significant. In the following sections, we briefly summarise what is known about the challenges to the health and wellbeing of young people in rural Australia, as a background for the discussion of the different ways in which these challenges are being met in various rural communities.

Issues for young people's wellbeing

Their social, economic, and physical environments, especially in the context of rapid social change, profoundly affect young people's health and sense of wellbeing. Although young people in rural Australia grow up in very different environments, they share common challenges such as isolation, and the effects of the changing rural economy. For young Aboriginal people, in addition to these issues, the historical struggle for land rights continues to play a significant role in their lives. Young people in rural areas also share common challenges, related to the social relationships that characterise rural communities. For example, close social networks and adherence to traditional values, while providing security and certainty to some, are detrimental to others, especially in relation to gender relations, sexuality, and sexual identities. Our research, involving focus group discussions with young people and youth workers in a number of rural locations, found that the issues they identified fell into two categories. One category was the external factors, imposed on young people through bureaucratic or historical arrangements (structural), and the other was the more personal, everyday or face-to-face interactions with people (cultural).

Structural issues

The things that limit young people's full participation in society are inevitably the lack of access to transport, health, education and community services, accommodation and employment. They are often interrelated in young people's experience; so that for example, lack of accommodation affects access to education, and transport difficulties have an effect on the accessibility of employment opportunities.

Transport

> [W]ithin towns there was some public transport, but outside of towns, people relied on cars. Links between towns were maintained by public transport, but bus services operate infrequently, and rail links have been scaled down. People in the north west, including towns like Mildura were as likely to access services in South Australia as in Victoria, because of the difficulties of transport, and people in towns along the Murray were likely to access services across the river in NSW (Wyn, Stokes & Stafford 1998).

This description could have applied to a number of rural communities in Australia. Lack of transport into rural towns' provincial centres is a common problem, especially for young people. Without adequate transport, young people have very limited access to health services, to education and employment opportunities, and to leisure facilities. Until they are able to drive, young people are reliant on others for transport. This can cause its own problems. For example, relying on someone else for transport may make it difficult to ensure discretion and confidentiality about a visit to the local health centre. Other researchers have suggested a link between the reliance of girls on older boys for transport and the institutionalisation of rape, in which sex is an accepted 'payment' for transport (Hillier, Warr & Haster 1996). The lack of access to alternative leisure has been linked to the dominance of the local 'footy club' as the only source of entertainment. Binge drinking at other local venues is also seen as a form of entertainment.

Health and community services

Access to appropriate health services is a common theme across many rural communities. Hillier, Warr & Haster (1996) found that young people in rural communities thought health services were very difficult to access. The issue is not simply one of access; the

way in which services are offered is also important. Young people place a high priority on services that are confidential and private, and on being treated as adults. Having access to bulk billing, and being able to enter a health centre discreetly were also seen as crucial. This means that the local health centre is not necessarily seen as an option. Young people in our study said that they would rather travel to a regional centre or to a metropolitan practice than risk embarrassment at the local practice. The focus groups revealed that lack of information might also be a factor. In some cases, young people were not aware of the existence of services that would meet their needs.

The health of young Aboriginal people is an urgent issue (Commonwealth Department of Human Services and Health 1995). Health for many young Aboriginal people involves spiritual dimensions, including the ability to complete their traditional initiation ceremonies, living on traditional land, and hunting. The appropriateness and relevance of services to their needs is a central issue. The annual death rates for young Aboriginal people in Western Australia, South Australia, and the Northern Territory are double that of young Australians of the same age for Australia as a whole (Bhatia & Anderson 1994). Wyn, Stokes and Stafford (1998) concluded that:

> Primary health care for some Aboriginal communities remains a fundamental issue. Simple public health provisions such as clean water, adequate and appropriate accommodation, and treatment and prevention of gastric, eye, ear and other infections remain a serious concern (Gray & Atkinson 1990). Brady's research on the health of young Aborigines confirmed that young Aboriginal people in rural and remote areas face the same issues as other young rural people, but that their health is often more seriously compromised by their circumstances, especially those living in remote communities. Brady reports that one Aboriginal health service, assessed the major health problems of young Aboriginal people as: sexually transmitted diseases, alcohol related problems, poor nutrition, skin disease, problems associated with pregnancy and domestic violence (Brady 1993; Brady 1991, p. 8).

Research on the health of young Aboriginal people reaches a consensus that the National Aboriginal Health Strategy and its recommendations should be strongly supported, including the principles of community control of primary health care, with the States retaining responsibility for secondary level, and other, health services (Brady 1991). Brady also emphasises that both the National Aboriginal Health Strategy and the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody stressed the special role of Aboriginal community-controlled organisations. In our focus groups in several communities, it was suggested that sometimes Aboriginal people are unwilling to access any government service through mistrust and fear.

Models of preventive care are especially relevant in rural areas. A decade ago it was suggested that in rural communities, a medical model of health care dominated. Today, while 'the hospital' still provides a focus for health concerns, it is clear that health promotion and preventive medicine is a more acceptable model, as many communities are now defining what this means in their particular situation. Often, this means the emergence of partnerships between different types of health service. However, the evidence from the focus groups suggests that the effect of this change is yet to be felt outside of regional centres.

Accommodation

Access to affordable accommodation is just as important to young people living in rural areas as it is to young people in the city. Young people in rural areas often have to move from their parents' home for work, or for their education, and in many areas there is a scarcity of public housing stock which young people can rent. Quixley's report on young people's housing needs in rural Australia remains the most comprehensive study (Quixley 1992). Her report shows the interrelationship between education, employment, and housing, and how they can combine to have a significant effect on young people's well-being.

Education

The increased importance of educational credentials in the job market has hit young people in rural communities especially hard, because in order to gain post-compulsory education or training credentials, it is common for rural young people to have to leave home and move to metropolitan or regional centres. There has been some improvement in areas served by university campuses and TAFEs . However, because of the lack of jobs and the restricted choices for study, students in rural areas tend to be denied the opportunity to develop the kinds of 'mixes' of school and work that are now becoming common for urban students (Wyn, Stokes & Stafford 1998).

Difficulty of access to education for rural youth at both a secondary and tertiary level is well documented and many reports have identified this as a significant source of disadvantage to young people in rural areas (e.g. Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission 1999; Stevens & Mason 1992; Robson 1991; Department of Employment, Education and Training 1990). However, this negative general picture is tempered by the fact that teachers in rural areas also develop innovative and alternative forms of education in order to respond to the particular needs of their community. This is especially evident in the literature on the education of young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth.

Employment

For young people, the lack of job opportunities in their local areas is a serious issue. Our focus group interviews reveal that there is a significant proportion of young people who would rather continue to live in their hometown, but feel 'forced' to leave by the lack of employment opportunities. This includes lack of job opportunities in towns, and the difficulty that farm families in some areas have in making a living from the land. Unemployment contributes directly to the destruction of rural communities, as the young make an exodus from their communities to towns and cities, and it places greater strains on the provision of support services for those who remain. Unemployment rates are higher in rural areas, and in some Aboriginal communities, as high as 95 per cent (Commonwealth Department of Human Services and Health 1994). Although recorded rates of unemployment amongst both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal rural youth are high, many are not recorded. In areas where seasonal work is common, young people's unemployment is masked by the jobs they do for part of the year, to tide them over.

Social and cultural issues

Young people's health and wellbeing are closely related to how they see themselves and the quality of relationships they have with significant others. The social and cultural issues discussed here are linked to the structural factors we have outlined above.

Gender relations

'Gender issues' are increasingly being recognised as one of the key social factors that needs to be taken into account in developing health promotion strategies for young people. The effects of domestic violence are compounded by the lack of alternative accommodation, the lack of professional help and the tendency for local police to be influenced by the community values which 'turn a blind eye' to violence in domestic relationships (Coorey 1990). In some instances, women face the added stress of victimisation from an intolerant community if they leave their husbands (Iley 1993). The issue of domestic violence is also now being openly discussed in some Aboriginal communities. This is an especially sensitive area, given the history of the violent treatment of Aboriginal people by whites (Brady 1993). For example, Brady points out the effect of the institutionalisation of young Aboriginal people on missions, as a factor affecting the quality of relationships between men and women in this generation.

Narrow conceptions of masculinity and femininity are also of concern. Our focus group interviews revealed that the strong commitment to sports such as football and netball tended to reinforce gender stereotypes. Although sport was a positive aspect of their lives, some were less enthusiastic about the expectation that football frequently included a heavy ('macho') drinking culture. Associated with this culture is the practice of 'bonnet surfing' and 'dirt surfing' in some communities, which put young men's health at risk. The focus on gender should not imply however, that rural women are victims within traditionally conservative communities. Women often constitute a formidable, if unacknowledged, political force in rural communities.

Suicide

> The very tradition of self-sufficiency may prevent young men in rural communities from seeking help when they need it (Graham 1994).

The research literature is divided on the issue of whether suicide rates for young people are higher in rural than in urban areas. For example, Dudley et al. (1992) showed that the rate of suicide in rural areas of New South Wales has increased, whereas a Queensland study (Cantor & Coory 1993) found similar rates of suicide for young men in rural and urban areas—although they found that there were higher rates of male suicide in all areas of Queensland compared with New South Wales.

The decline of the rural economy and the consequent stress this has placed on the health of rural people, is linked to the high rate of male suicide in rural New South Wales (Lawrence & Williams 1990). The effects of unemployment, of poor educational opportunities, and poverty itself, contribute to the high suicide rate. There is evidence that 'rural youth experience higher levels of domestic violence and homicides' and 'consume more alcohol and have readier access to firearms than their urban counterparts' (Graham 1994, p. 409). There is also evidence linking suicide with community intolerance for gay people. The following extract was originally quoted in a local newspaper. It is about:

> [T]he tragic story of Nicolas, a young gay man who failed to come to terms with his sexuality in a country town .... He explained that he couldn't live up to the role of a 'typical country Catholic boy'. He knew that he would never be accepted for what he really was. 'You're shunned in the Catholic Church if you are a homosexual' a friend said. Nicholas felt his place in the church, family, school and local community would no longer exist and therefore his life was not worth living because these things were so important to him (quoted in Green 1996, pp. 85–86).

Social isolation and youth culture

> Young people in Australia's rural communities have an enormous amount in common with the older people in their communities, because they share the same environment and in both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities, young people have a lot to learn from the 'older generation', associated with both survival in 'the bush' and with the enjoyment of the rural environment. Sport continues to be an important source of solidarity between the generations. Yet, at the same time, young people have different interests and needs from the older people in their communities. Summed up in the inadequate term 'entertainment', this issue is raised as a concern by young people over and over again (Wyn, Stokes & Stafford 1998).

Young people would like to go to movie theatres (that show current movies), to see live theatre that is relevant to young people, and to participate in dances, discos or other forms of youth community entertainment. The alternatives to these forms of entertainment and sociability are often an early engagement with 'pub culture' and a reliance on the drinking which frequently accompanies sports such as football. Young people in our focus groups were frank about the extent to which binge drinking occurs because of a perceived lack of alternatives.

Without legitimate space of their own, young people are seen as a threat if they gather in public places, such as the main street, the football oval, or other places where, officially, they do not have a reason to gather. The focus group interviews found, for example, that young people in one rural town were not gathering in town to be part of the 'druggie' groups, but because they had nowhere else to be.

The recognition and acceptance of 'youth cultures' in rural communities is important because of the positive place of young people in the cultural life of rural Australia. It is as important as the creation of jobs for young people, and as their educational opportunities. In the context of the changes that have affected many of Australia's rural communities, the creation of stronger youth-oriented communities can contribute significantly to young people's wellbeing and to their own ability to construct meaningful futures.

Social division

The social divisions that exist in rural communities can seriously limit options for young people. We have already discussed the effects of gender divisions on young people. Both race and social class also have a considerable impact on young people's wellbeing and their options for the future.

Not everyone in rural communities belongs to the community in the same way. In focus group discussions, young people mentioned divisions between the 'aristocracy' (the traditional land-owning families) and the 'landless' (seasonal workers). It was suggested that 'to belong, be respected and get a job in town, you need to have a surname that matches the street names'. These older divisions are sometimes the source of more contemporary divisions. For example, in recent times, the relocation of people needing public housing, from big regional and metropolitan centres to the available public housing stock in rural areas and isolated regional centres, has created an added demand on already stretched services. People who move into this situation are often in distressed social circumstances, and the lack of public transport and employment only exacerbate their problems. In many towns they form a separate group, whose dependence on income support clashes with local traditions of self-reliance.

For many young people, the best thing about living in the country is 'the security of knowing most (if not all) of the people in your town and the sense of being far removed from the problems of the city' (Hillier, Warr & Haster 1996, pp. 10–11). Yet this idyllic experience of rural life is not always matched by the reality. The effect of social class in rural areas is to replace a real sense of belonging with a sense of exclusion.

Community strategies

Many communities acknowledge the issues outlined above, and have developed strategies which address them in a way that is sensitive to local circumstances and concerns. Despite the uniqueness of each community and the variation in response, it is possible to identify a number of processes that are associated with successful outcomes. Here we document a range of strategies and highlight the processes, which are in each case seen to be integral to their success.

Young people's involvement

Many rural communities across Australia are holding youth forums that allow young people to have a voice and speak out about the issues that concern them. For young people to be regarded as an important part of the community and then to regard themselves as important to the community, their views on issues need to be heard. An example is an initiative undertaken at the Youth Services Centre in Wodonga, Victoria. A group of 16 year olds meet weekly to discuss and initiate strategies around the issues of suicide, unemployment, and pathways for school leavers. This group was set up after the young people attended a youth forum in Canberra (organised by young people) which was attended by 400 youth. The Canberra forum would meet again in six months to discuss strategies from the different communities, nationally. In order to contribute to this, the young people in Wodonga organised a regional forum to find out the views of other young people in the area, which will lead to the development of strategies to address the identified issues.

The step from 'being heard' (youth voice) to generating 'action' is an important one. As Holdsworth (1998) emphasises, 'a simple focus on being heard can merely serve to make it appear that young people are active participants; it may, in fact serve as a "safety valve" to ease pressure for real changes in decision making.'

In the Goulburn North Eastern region of Victoria there has been recognition of the need to move from voice to action. Throughout 1997 there were four forums held called 'Teenroar' that gave visibility to issues identified by local young people. In 1998 a new phase started with 'Teenaction.' The facilitator, Jan Osmotherly from the Country Connections Project, describes how 'The idea is to build on what we know and rather than just "roar"—'act on implementation of programs which will positively address relevant issues in the youth culture.'

'Teenroar' and 'Teenaction' have involved nine secondary colleges over a 300-kilometre radius in the Goulburn North Eastern region. Project workers from Country Connection worked intensively for two days a week over a ten week, time frame with young people from the particular school that was organising 'Teenroar' to develop all aspects of the program including the agenda, catering, advertising, and the budget. Young people evaluate the event and recommendations are given to the staff and school council regarding issues identified at 'Teenaction' and 'Teenroar'.

The move from voice to action is shown through the role that young people take in working with policy to bring about change at a systemic level. An example of this is work on youth suicide prevention. To access the State government Youth Suicide Prevention money, schools have to have a policy in place by June 1998. But at the schools involved in 'Teenaction', the young people had not been asked for their ideas on the policy. So the young people have put together a number of recommendations at 'Teenaction'. They recommended the need for:

- students to be trained as peer mediators
- a counsellor who is not a teacher in a youth-friendly space on the school sites
- teachers to receive professional development on youth issues
- an anti-homophobic campaign, as young people identified the link between the lack of acceptance of homosexuality and suicide.

Communities can also identify how young people can be directly involved in service provision, and the development of links between agencies and young people. For example, in response to a lack of youth-specific health services in the Mandurah area, the Peel Health Centre has established a network of practising peer health educators for adolescents. Twenty peer leaders were identified from the local schools and youth programs to be trained over a series of 12, two-hour sessions on youth health issues, leadership and life skills. They were then employed at the Health Matters Shop in the local shopping complex one night a week as health educators, to circulate among the young people who frequent the centre in order to establish a link between the young people and the health service (Mukherjee, Stokes & Holdsworth 1997).

Local involvement

The involvement of local communities in planning, developing, controlling, managing, and providing services and programs is now regarded as integral to their success by practitioners in rural areas (Cheers 1992). A number of researchers have commented that 'most Australian policy formulators, service planners, and practitioners are socialised, trained and work in an urban context, and are informed by urban-based research and literature from Australia and overseas' (Cheers 1992, p. 13). While concepts and models which are developed in urban areas offer important insights, it is important to recognise that they cannot necessarily be applied directly to rural communities. Cheers notes that 'many urban-based welfare services are also unsuited to rural settlements because of their high public visibility because staff roles are defined too narrowly, or because of inappropriate funding and resourcing principles'.

In addition, funding decisions which are made on the basis of the 'broad picture', can be especially inappropriate in particular rural settings. For example, changes to the Youth Allowance have made young people dependent on families for a longer period. The effects of this are especially punitive to young people and families in rural areas in which the added high costs of transport, lack of employment, and poverty make the cost of supporting young people even harder to bear (Wyn, Stokes & Stafford 1998; Dwyer et al. 1998).

At Beechworth Secondary College there has been an emphasis on how to engage a group of Year 9 and 10 female students as full citizens, including them in decisions about themselves, with a community-based response to problem solving (Semmens & Stokes 1997). The students perceived a lack of information and support for young people's health issues from the local health agencies. In response to this the students formed the Young

Women's Project and developed a poster resource with assistance from the school and the Goulburn North Eastern Women's Health Service (NEWomen). The resource is entitled *This is where it's at* and will be promoted and used throughout Victorian schools with support from the health service who will facilitate workshops for students to use the resource.

Collaboration

There is substantial evidence that collaboration amongst agencies such as schools, health workers, youth workers, police, recreation workers and others has the potential to enhance the level of support a community can give to its young people (Stokes & Tyler 1997). Young people's health and wellbeing, in particular, benefits from intersectoral collaboration to:

- identify and address the gaps and duplication in service provision, and
- empower and enhance the community through their direct involvement, with an emphasis on the role of young people in this process.

Many rural areas have community network meetings once a month to share information about the services that are available. In the smaller towns, all agencies attend the one meeting, while in the bigger regional centres the meetings tend to focus on specific areas such as health, youth, and Koori issues, which are attended by smaller interest groups. Despite this, representatives of agencies in regional centres expressed the desire to have more across-agency meetings, especially in the education sector. An example is found in the Stawell area of Victoria, where people who work with adolescents and young adults, work collaboratively to assist and support each other and to proactively address local young people's needs (Mukhurjee, Stokes & Holdsworth 1997).

There is increasing recognition that agencies outreaching from the regional centres can join together to fund a single multi-skilled outreach worker. This worker is then able to spend time in one particular area, rather than having each agency send an outreach worker one day a week to a number of different areas. An example of this was being organised in Murray Bridge in South Australia. There are also a number of difficulties and barriers to these kinds of initiatives. One of the major barriers is the way in which funding criteria foster competition for funding. Compulsory, competitive tendering can create tensions between agencies, instead of fostering collaboration.

It has been noted that the development of intersectoral collaboration has been hindered by the competitive tendering process between councils, agencies and community groups which all rely on the ever-diminishing supply of government funding for their survival and for the provision of services (Stokes & Tyler 1997). In one regional area, our researchers were informed that there would be tenderers from all the different services for a particular part of a service, competing against each other. In particularly poor communities some services can be so keen to retain their clients (and therefore their access to funding) that they will not necessarily refer a client on to the most appropriate agency (see Stokes & Tyler 1997, p. 46). It has also been suggested that in cases where large private metropolitan service providers tender for rural service provision, they are tempted to sacrifice services to remote and difficult-to-reach areas.

Despite these tensions, there is also evidence of extensive collaboration. For example, in the Goulburn North Eastern region of Victoria, the Ovens and King Community Health Centre and Bright Secondary College are collaborating. They are developing a five-year

program, looking at structural, community, and curriculum issues related to self-esteem and resiliency development with students, teachers, and families. In its developmental stage, this project involves inter-agency meetings between teachers, parents, school council, community health and students to develop a response to issues and to link with the school council structure. The aim of the program is to bring about a reorientation of school structure and culture in order to increase the opportunities for young people to have input into their school direction and community decision-making. At this stage this is being implemented through a change in the home group structure, as well as the development of orientation programs for new staff.

The program has positive outcomes for both the school and the community health service through the development of closer links between teachers and health workers, providing improved referral services for students and families. The collaboration process has involved the negotiation of the following issues:

- the lack of adequate and flexible funding for the program development on the school site has meant that the school and the health centre find funds from already stretched budgets;
- the differences in approach to welfare, health, and discipline issues with the need for undergraduate training to address a team approach in both disciplines, and
- the need for a quick fix to problems rather than the understanding of the need for long-term structural change (Mukherjee, Stokes & Holdsworth 1997).

Diversity

While there are many common challenges faced by rural communities in providing for young people's health and wellbeing, the picture to emerge is one of local diversity and of specific needs. The only way in which this diversity will be met is through ensuring that local people are partners in all the stages of program and service provision. Because the problems are complex, spanning both social and structural issues, so the strategies to address them will need to be flexible and multifaceted (Wyn, Stokes & Stafford 1998).

The following examples illustrate how two rural communities have developed very different strategies to attempt to address their concerns about young people's use of alcohol. The examples draw on information obtained for the report *The Nature of Health Service-School Links in Australia* (Mukherjee, Stokes & Holdsworth 1997).

In Launceston, Tasmania, an inter-sectoral project entitled 'Remember the Time We Had Last Night' was developed. This project was designed in response to the tradition for students at the end of Year 10 to engage in excessive alcohol consumption, especially in the events surrounding the end-of-year 'Leaver's Dinner'. Three members of the Drug Education Network (DEN), Alcohol and Drug Services and the Tasmanian Police worked together to develop and deliver a program towards the end of Year 10 in two Launceston high schools. One of the facilitating factors in this case was the relatively small size of the community, enabling workers from different agencies to network effectively.

The program emphasised safer ways to celebrate and have a good time, while avoiding the negative social outcomes, legal implications and health consequences of excessive alcohol use. It used the perceptions and knowledge of the students as a key part of the program. A parent evening was arranged to let parents have their say, and professional development of teachers was offered in the use of the *Rethinking Drinking* alcohol education program.

Although the program was judged a success, especially with the parents (who formed a support group as a result of the meeting, to address wider issues around drugs and alcohol), continuation of the program still depends on the resources to be made available.

At Yirrkala in East Arnhem Land in the Northern Territory, a group of Aboriginal women called the Sober Women's Group deliver the message about alcohol consumption to the young Aboriginal people. The Yolngu (Aboriginal people) in East Arnhem Land define real knowledge as that which derives from older men and women in their community and is based on Gurrutu (kinship system). Unless the health messages are taught by Yolgnu, using traditional methods then the messages received at school are regarded as having been imposed by Balanda (non-Aboriginal) and are not important.
Educating Yolngu young people about alcohol and nutrition are two examples of culturally-determined and appropriate health messages. The education is based on Gurrutu, which is the kinship system for the extended family and the behaviour that is necessary to maintain the kinship systems. When alcohol was discussed it was placed in reference to Gurrutu. All children at the Yirrkala School were placed in groups to describe and discuss Gurrutu and their skin groups and the importance of Gurrutu to Yolngu (Aboriginal people). It was then shown that alcohol 'puts shyness to sleep' and that people then go off and live with the wrong related kinship group. This is wrong for Yolngu culture as it breaks down the kinship system. The health effects of alcohol were shown to the children by cooking a wallaby. When a wallaby is cooked its liver becomes hard. This was related to alcohol to show the effect that alcohol has on peoples' livers.

The diversity that is needed in different communities is further shown by responses of different communities to the issue of petrol sniffing. In South Australia and in Central Australia programs and resources developed to try to prevent petrol sniffing are based on the relationship of the young people to their land. In Indulkana in South Australia, Anangu (traditional Aboriginal) young boys who had not yet taken up 'sniffing' were taken on a trip during the Christmas holidays to Yalata and the Great Australian Bight with the theme of the trip being 'What will Indulkana be like in twenty years time?' The aim of the trip was to reinforce the virtues of not taking up sniffing and to emphasise the role that they need to play in their own community (Mukherjee, Stokes & Holdsworth 1997). Focus group interviews in western New South Wales revealed that petrol sniffing is also an issue for young Kooris. However, different strategies need to be devised to address their needs, because many of these Koori people are part of the stolen generation who have been transported to where they live and do not have the same relationship to the land and country (Wyn, Stokes & Stafford 1998).

Sustainability

Young people's wellbeing will be most strongly fostered in communities in which there is a sense of continuity, and in which young people feel they can depend on the established services and personnel. Unfortunately, many good initiatives are short-term because they are so directly linked to funding provision. Community strategies need to be based on a realistic assessment of the amount of time needed to develop collaborative processes that will be sustainable. Structural support at either a regional, State or national level is often important in enabling community processes to get started. The successful collaboration relating to the management of health care needs of students in schools initiated by the Departments of Education and Health in South Australia, for example, took around four years to develop (Mukherjee, Stokes & Holdsworth 1997).

An example of programs being devised at a local level, but funded at a State level, is the Health Promoting Schools initiative in Queensland. Here, different local programs are being developed in Brisbane and south east Queensland, the population centres along the coast and the hinterland as well as in some inland regional and remote areas. The Queensland Department of Health has taken the lead in developing Health Promoting Schools by providing one position in the Queensland Education Department and providing some resources to Public Health Units across the state. Of particular interest is the Public Health Unit at Maroochydore developing the program on the Sunshine Coast. It has aimed to take a whole school approach to Health Promoting Schools by working in collaboration with schools, the Department of Education, and health professionals. Their initial work has been aimed at educating schools, education department officials and health professionals about Health Promoting Schools. The Unit has taken a developmental approach to Health Promoting Schools, beginning with whole-school change rather than the identification of critical issues.

Conclusion

In response to a range of adverse circumstances, many rural communities are developing strategies that promote young people's health and wellbeing. Based on an extensive review of the available literature and on original research, this chapter has described some key characteristics of community strategies that are meeting young people's needs. One of the most common elements is the linking of agencies that support young people. Many services in rural areas need to collaborate to survive in a climate of declining populations and funds. It is important that the goal of collaboration is not simply to prevent young people from falling through the gaps of lack of service provision. Community strategies also need to develop an active role for young people, in order to be relevant to their needs and to affirm the positive value placed on youth in rural communities. Sustainable strategies are developed to address local needs (rather than departmental priorities) and within realistic timeframes that are conducive to the participation of young people.

Finally, it is in the interests of all Australians to find ways to support the development of rural and remote communities, because rural Australia is an important part of our society. The health and wellbeing of young people will need to be a central component of any strategy to build viable rural communities. Young people hold the future of these communities, but more importantly, they have vitality, optimism, and knowledge to contribute now.

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CHAPTER 17
A regional approach to youth employment: The role of young people in renewing regional communities

James Mulraney and Peter Turner

Far from being seen as a problem, young people are a major resource for rural and regional communities, and can play an important catalytic role in revitalising economic and social development at the local level. Communities can most easily be united around issues concerning the future and their hopes and ambitions for the younger generation.

This chapter seeks to reposition young people in their communities and to demonstrate their potential to help manage change and create more positive futures. It is presented in two sections each of which look at a separate aspect.

SECTION ONE

Background

Many areas of Australia face significant social and economic challenges. Globalisation processes and rationalisation of businesses and service provision continue to have serious impacts. The wool and timber industries, for example, have been significantly affected by world commodity prices. Other industries, such as the dairy and viticulture industries, now require less labour as the size of economic units increases, and as technological innovations are introduced banks, post offices, hospitals and other community services are under threat.

Paradoxically, while the majority of young people want to settle in or near their birthplace, they do not feel confident that there is a future for them in the region. This is in part because regions have high numbers and percentages of young unemployed people (approximately 30 per cent of 15–19 year olds in 1997 and rising). Clearly, the future development of the regions depends to a large extent on the vitality and enthusiasm of local young people, their skills and training, and the positive way they view the future.

In reality rural communities have enormous potential and are already showing success in the development of new areas of industry, and further adaptations of agribusiness. Australia is rich in both human and natural resources. There is significant tourism potential, produce is of world standard, and new value-added products are developing. There are emerging opportunities to increase employment in these developing industries and in areas such as tourism, entertainment, information technology and telecommunication (IT & T), viticulture, aquaculture and the service, health, and education industries.

However, regions commonly require a mechanism to act as a catalyst to bring this potential to fulfilment, principally to enhance the spirit of enterprise and self-reliance, and to energise and coordinate the different groups who can contribute to growth and prosperity. The potential of each region, together with the increased awareness of the need to change, offers an opportunity to build on existing leadership, to restart the local economy, and rebuild community confidence. State and Federal government agencies, in partnership with key sectors of the local community, have a significant role to play.

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Synergies can be created at the local level by judicious interventions of support, integrated across agencies.

A focus on young people as a central component of a new rural and regional economic development strategy for Australia could catalyse considerable positive change by:

- changing the *culture* towards one that is enterprising, forward-looking, and one which engages with both local and global directions;
- providing best practice education and training opportunities in the region, and
- creating new employment opportunities which will allow talented and enterprising young people to remain in the region and contribute to its prosperity.

A new paradigm of service delivery is required, that both supports revitalised local leadership and economic development while visibly implementing government policy. Strategic interventions should initially focus around coordination and leadership development, with a focus on the future and an emphasis on the role of young people in that future.

Rural and regional consultations

Rural and regional consultations undertaken by Department of State Development, University of Melbourne and the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT) have revealed:

- Communities are seeking interventions that will increase the sense of belonging for young people in their region. In order to achieve this, young people need to be more connected to relevant local economic and social activities.
- While some young people will always take up the traditional occupations that are available in the region, such as farming, dairying, working in service industries and in trades, there is also a need to facilitate young people's involvement in new enterprises and in encouraging a more enterprising culture.
- There is also a recognised need to maximise the return opportunities for talented young people to regional business and industry through fostering more effective links and communication amongst education, training, business, and industry groups.
- A key issue is the positive management of processes of economic and social change. Community ownership of the directions and programs for change is essential, and within this, the participation of young people in local and regional affairs is crucial.

Rural youth

While rural young people do not constitute a homogeneous group, they do share a number of circumstances (Wyn, Stokes & Stafford 1998). In many rural areas in Australia, the 1990s have been an era of almost unprecedented change. For young people, the changes associated with global economic conditions, local climatic circumstances, political decisions and regional economic restructuring have left them wondering if they have a future in rural Australia.

Yet, if rural Australia is to regenerate its economies, young people will have to play a central role.

Research projects are currently underway (Youth Research Centre, University of Melbourne), aiming to conduct a full review of what is currently known about the generation of positive approaches to education, training and employment pathways for

young people in rural areas, identifying the factors which enhance young people's opportunities and those which constitute barriers. A more action research approach is required—one that demonstrates new and emerging models of youth-driven economic development.

Young people are too often lumped together as a problem—another disadvantaged group—and, if we are to move out of this deficit approach, we must become more aware of the need to take account of the diversity of young people who constitute *rural Australian youth*. It will be increasingly important to acknowledge the different needs and circumstances of young women, young men, young Aboriginal people, young people in remote areas, and those who are living in poverty or under very constrained financial circumstances. The extended period of being classified as *youth* (it is now not uncommon for 26 year olds to still live with their parents) also needs to be factored into any new paradigms.

Alternative future models

There is an urgent need to identify models of best practice in the area of regional economic development, demonstrating how education and training provision can be linked to growth industries, the local economy, and new civic initiatives that offer employment to young people in rural areas. These models will include approaches that will strengthen the development of enterprising educational institutions and communities. Partnership approaches, which model integrated service delivery, and are focused on employment pathway generation for young people, can be further developed. There is a need to also model the ways in which government agencies can cooperate with each other and with the private sector to enhance opportunities that exist in rural areas to regenerate economic growth.

What should we be aiming for?

To create a more enterprising culture that is future and opportunity oriented. To provide a central role for youth in this dynamic culture which increases their sense of belonging. To build best-practice education and training systems linked directly to the regional economy, which focus on technology, enterprise, and sustainable employment.

The focus on youth represents a new approach, which draws on successful developments in rural and regional development at national and international levels. Action needs to be carefully planned to build on local strengths and to integrate with current regional directions, while introducing exciting new elements based on the concepts of enterprise education, youth leadership and coordinated employment planning.

Who should be involved?

The participation of an extensive range of organisations including local government, regional business and industry groups, government departments and small business is required.

An alliance of local key stakeholders and natural civic leaders could formulate an approach in the early stages of initiation but the focus must quickly shift to young people themselves as leaders of the change, otherwise there is a risk being seen as hypocritical or patronising.

A rural example

In the south west region of Victoria the Premier appointed a Community Forum that developed an integrated strategy based on five areas of change. The approach is summarised below:

1. SWEET-P (South West Education, Employment and Training Pathways)

   The project focus is the coordination of employment needs with education and training provision in both Geelong and Warrnambool.

   In Geelong the initial process is through a forum of key stakeholders centred on the Geelong Region Vocational Education Council (GRVEC) model. An analysis of communication issues and other inhibitors is to be followed with advice and support for development. Federal funding is being sought to expand GRVEC to facilitate a skills audit and to begin employment placement matching programs.

   In Warrnambool there is a significant presence of unemployed youth requiring prompt intervention. Initially a coordinator is to be appointed (preferably a local person with strong industry experience and connections) to support the development of a specific strategy for this targeted group.

   Following the successful establishment of these two regional SWEET-P networks, sub-groups can be established in smaller rural and regional centres almost simultaneously.

2. Towards more enterprising communities

   - In the Surf Coast Shire: assist local government to establish a Centre of Excellence in Youth Enterprise with a focus on the surfing industry precinct—a showcase for youth-related business and value-added tourism.
   - Education: actively promote and introduce enterprise education and business-related courses, through programs such as Young Achievement Australia, Australian Business Week, National Enterprise Day Initiatives and Small Business Management.
   - Expansion of business incubation programs: youth dedicated incubator, Start Me Up Program with Small Business Vic, beginning in Warrnambool and linking the Multimedia Centre with an expansion of the existing incubator.

- Youth Entrepreneurship Scheme to be established in Geelong in partnership with the City Council. Venture capital needs to be coordinated and sponsors found through industry networks.
- Mortlake (an enterprising community model): a research project on how to create a successful school/community partnership with an economic/environmental approach.

3. Communication and information

Already, some schools and community houses form 'hubs' of communication and information exchange in the region. These networks are to form the basis of an integrated community approach to more rapid social and economic development.

A communication/information strategy focusing on young people in the first instance would connect young people across the region and outside it:

- State Training Profile courses for young people in IT—IT Traineeships;
- promotion of VicOne access points in all schools to the community;
- expanding Skills Net in small communities, based on peer training;
- set up international projects eg. schools via UNESCO schools-net.

4. New paradigm teacher education

- Deakin University is being supported to establish, at the Warrnambool campus, a teacher education program to offer specialist training, drawing on a number of developments that have already been trialled in schools in Australia and internationally. This program would be distinctive in providing a more coordinated approach to enterprise education, vocational education and training/school-to-work transition, and information technology and telecommunication.
- Programs focusing on youth development (life skills, mental health, youth leadership) full service schooling, and middle schooling will be trialled.
- Students would spend a major proportion of their time learning 'on site' in an Internship based in local secondary schools, TAFE and local industry.

5. Youth leadership

Youth leadership is intended to be locally driven and supported, through the creation of a youth enterprise with a specific focus on coordinating activities such as:

- youth forums;
- youth entertainment events (e.g. music based);
- mentoring programs;
- youth radio;
- exchanges/excursions with other regions and capital cities;
- young people's market;
- leadership programs—Williamstown Foundation.

Their major task will be to orchestrate a series of broad youth consultations across the region, culminating in a large annual youth forum representing all areas and feeding directly into the Premier's Youth Council.

An urban example

The Northern Adelaide Regional Education Employment and Training (NAREET) Network has put structures in place that have encouraged educators and trainers at all levels to work collaboratively with community and industry stakeholders to constructively attack the issue of full youth employment.

In the disadvantaged area of Northern Adelaide this learning community partnership approach is evolving into a very successful model which could be transmitted to similar communities.

As we shift out of the passive, benefit-oriented welfare system towards a regional skill-and-wealth building approach to economic and employment development, it becomes increasingly obvious that more active, locally sensitive measures are needed. In Northern Adelaide, regional approaches are developing that are giving more coherence and effectiveness to public sector programs (particularly in education and training) and moving towards measures promoting entrepreneurship, job creation, and innovation. This is leading us to more actively promote and develop the local labour market and to make explicit the skills required and the pathways into this labour market.

Recently, broader regional objectives have been defined through developments in education, enterprise and employment, giving rise to new groupings and potential new structures. While government-led regional development policies have been important in the past, a more grass roots, indigenous development strategy is becoming more critical in local economic development. Local personality and organisational factors such as the capacity to form partnerships, establish innovation, and encourage entrepreneurship, are vital in this approach.

In practice this is being driven by the private sector, although public institutions and policy are being harnessed along the way. Public policy and investment in human and institutional development capacity must be further developed so that Northern Adelaide can minimise market failures and avoid ineffective public policy, particularly that which presents obstacles to dynamic local economic development.

The Northern Adelaide Development Board (NADB) recognises the importance of small businesses as catalysts for economic growth. Small firms play a dynamic role in the region, providing jobs and generating local wealth. They introduce new technologies, act as innovators, and help maintain positive community attitudes towards enterprise development. Grouped into districts, clusters or networks, they have widespread impact on the region's global competencies and its resilience to economic shocks.

The NADB assists this development by providing research and conferences for small businesses, promoting and supporting new and small firms, ensuring regional training of entrepreneurs, and providing special support for women entrepreneurs and youth in business.

According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), international experience shows that 'policies focusing on macroeconomic stabilisation and growth have not been able to resolve the problems of structural long-term unemployment and exclusion for growing numbers of people'.

In fact 'marginalisation, dependency and impoverishment challenge traditional notions of national prosperity, as they threaten social cohesion and take a high toll on the lives of individuals and communities'.

Regional structures that bring private sector and public sector individuals into joint collaborative programs (e.g. Northern Adelaide Regional Education Employment and Training) promote new social as well as economic activities, leading to a more balanced and active community. In the short term, setting up these regional structures and promoting their activities can be expensive but they can have 'a profound effect on the long-term wealth of the community' (OECD).

Northern Adelaide has still some important work to do in this area, particularly in social development, and the OECD suggests the following action:

- further analysis and definition of the local economy that complements the mainstream market economy and includes social as well as economic development;
- seminars and similar activities which explore ways to integrate the *human* and market economies, thus generating jobs in sectors which are not directly exposed to competition;
- some comparative study of economic and social conditions in selected groups of similar urban areas (e.g. Western Sydney).

Recent OECD research (Jobs Study and the White Papers of the Commission of the European Union) stressed the need for more active labour market policies at a regional level. This requires the development of a clear understanding of the relationship between a qualified labour force and local training opportunities, as well as an understanding of the capacity of local labour markets to adjust to changing conditions.

A starting point for the Northern Adelaide region is an evaluation of the local labour market, particularly the operations and management of the labour market at a regional level. The region continues to:

- Examine the cooperation and coordination levels between the major regional players.
- Research key issues in local employment management such as
  - training levels and provision
  - role of employment placement agencies
  - coordination of the various sectors and the three levels of government.
- Organise seminars/conferences for major players on national and international approaches to regional job creation
- Develop guidelines/policy for more effective local employment management.

Northern Adelaide has begun the process of culture change that will allow the community to leave behind decades of passive welfare dependency.

The Northern Adelaide Region of Councils (NAROC), NADB and its support structures (such as NAREET), serve as the focal point for cooperation within the region as the economy is in this transition phase. These collaborative structures develop and implement policy and programs that channel the experience and expertise of local leaders in key social policy and economic areas, into regional activity. The results are obviously translating into a far more focused and supported business community, with strong links and partnerships in the public sector and widely throughout the community.

Small business is the cornerstone of the growing private sector. It provides the impetus for the establishment of an enterprising culture, where individuals are prepared to take initiative and to assume responsibility for their own actions. These are the catalysts for local job creation. At a regional level we must provide advice, information and support to reinforce the growth of the small business sector as the site of most employment growth.

Need for enterprise creation

Since 1982 the OECD has been promoting programs that concentrate on small business creation, particularly in stagnant economies, in response to the 'growing importance of small firms as a source of new jobs.'

Plant closures and large scale job losses (e.g. BHP) have reduced our confidence in the ability of large *globalised* corporations to guarantee lifelong employment. As well, job growth in the public sector is limited by the current phase of lean budgetary policies.

OECD evidence suggests that job creation is 'closely linked to the capacity to create new businesses in particular, as it relates to strong entrepreneurial turbulence and high enterprise birth and death rates.'

SECTION TWO

Regional learning community

Northern Adelaide is a dynamic region with a clear focus on improving economic and social performance. The interconnecting relationships of education, business, local government, university, training providers, and community organisations has resulted in a regional commitment to articulating pathways for local people into employment, education, and training to skill the workforce to meet the changing needs of regional employers.

During late 1994, a group of people accepted the challenge of regional employers to work together, articulated by Peter Smith, Managing Director, at a Northern Adelaide Development Board (NADB) reference group meeting. They produced a concept for development titled 'Pathways and Partnerships for Young People in Northern Adelaide.' The concept included a definition of regional development, the creation of an *enterprise* high school, a national conference on *Jobs for Young Australians,* and a Youth in Business program to follow OECD research that creating their own employment was a valuable option for young people in the current employment market.

A major feature of the concept was the creation of the Northern Adelaide Regional Employment, Education, and Training Network (NAREET). The network began in 1995 and involved up to 100 people in working together to improve employment and training for people in the region, particularly young people. NAREET reports directly to the Northern Adelaide Development Board.

The success of the network has been evident from its inception. In the first year it brought together for the first time regional schools, the university, business, local government, and training providers to plan how to work together to improve employment and training in the region. It built on the success of the *Jobs for Young Australians* conference.

NAREET was marketed to regional business and initiated a Jobs Pathway Program to place young people into employment in the region.

The pathways committee was active in developing vocational education options in the region, with the introduction of the TRAC program, planning for the Automotive and Engineering\Electronics pathways, and expanding the number of schools involved. The NAREET-Industry-Partnership group arranged seminars to discuss options with employers.

An intersectoral committee oversaw research about employment options for young people, which they published as a booklet called *It's your future: Pathways to employment in Northern Adelaide* and distributed to 5000 Year 9 and 10 students in the region. As well, this committee staged the Career Expo articulating options for 3500 Year 9 to 12 students.

Vocational education options now include schools, training providers, and the university in planning. Training providers work together to expand the options available and target young people to take up the options for training with success. Schools understand their role in vocational education and plan courses within their own locations as well as joining regional programs e.g. TRAC, Building and Construction, Automotive and Horticulture.

With the introduction of the South Australian Government 'Ready Set Go' program, schools in Northern Adelaide were in a healthy position to extend their network to expand the vocational options available to young people in 1997. Regional schools have co-operated with the NADB to form the Northern Adelaide Regional Workplace Learning Centre. Schools have funded a Coordinator position, and two additional staff positions to ensure regional programs continue to flourish and work placements are regionally coordinated and planned.

A review of the Career Expo has resulted in the development of a strategy to plan a coordinated industry visits program for young people with the support of regional industry. A research project with the National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER) in relation to work placements and the advantage to small employers will provide valuable information for accessing small business.

The university sector successfully introduced a bridging program in Information Technology (IT) to supplement the NADB\NAREET Certificate III and IV program to provide skilled IT technicians for the workforce.

In school programs such as Office Skills, Food and Hospitality, Furniture Construction and Graphic Design work placements are arranged as part of the schools' commitment to providing learning at an on-the-job setting. Often classroom teachers or students themselves arrange work placements. In the regional model, work placement is a part of an overall strategy. Our model links it to regional economic development to generate a partnership approach to forge greater employment, training and educational opportunities for people in the region.

The Jobs Pathway Program is now administered by the regional public high schools in partnership with regionally-based Jobs Network brokers. The assistance available to young people to build a pathway to education, training and employment is now a strong partnership focused on successful outcomes.

Authentic lifelong learning

Enterprise education is directed towards achieving a learning culture which will result in greater numbers of students and school leavers enthused and equipped to identify, create, initiate, and successfully manage personal business, work, and community opportunities.

There are two powerful reasons for encouraging enterprise education:

- The skills and qualities that are generally seen as enterprising are *increasingly important* for Australians—especially to young Australians—in maximising opportunities in the environment of change which is the nineties.
- Australia's future prosperity depends critically on starting and growing more successful businesses ... *the development of an enterprise culture in individuals will improve the performance of business and support business development.*

Thus it is no surprise it is becoming increasingly important in Australia to expose young people to the value of enterprising behaviour in taking charge of their own future and doing things for themselves.

> An improvement in enterprise culture would impact on Australians in many ways. Broad-based enterprise programs would have benefits to the community beyond business and industry, for example in employment generation, workplace relations, social and community organisations. Enterprise and entrepreneurship provides all types of organizations—government, private and non-profit—with the ability and opportunity to adapt and survive in conditions of rapid economic and environmental change.

The Task Force also concluded that the lack of enterprise and entrepreneurial studies at school, in vocational education and training and in higher education, forms part of the reason why there is not a strong small business culture in Australia. Enterprise education is the main arena whereby enterprise and entrepreneurship can be encouraged across an entire society and the range of business organisations.

Salisbury High School is a best practice example in the region of a school implementing at a local regional level, the national and global requirements for people to be positive about an enterprise culture and acquire and promote enterprising behaviour. The school has taken up the challenge to transform its educational program, and approach to learning, to better equip students for the future.

The school listens to local industry and employers and works in partnership to provide a curriculum that is responsive to industry needs and provides opportunities for students. The classroom focus is on students achieving a personal best in the key competencies for work within a balanced curriculum framework, which promotes good citizenship.

The integration of vocational and general education, in an enterprise classroom methodology which produced clearly understood pathways to employment, training, and further education was the impetus Salisbury High was looking for to make a difference for its students and support their move from welfare dependency to creating a future for themselves. The schools' programs now stimulate students to put their own ideas into practice, make real decisions, assess risk and accept responsibility for achieving their own successes.

Teachers are working on understanding and implementing a different pedagogy to expand their methodological repertoire. Their role now includes the 'brokerage of authentic learning experiences' in real life situations, which contain the potential for students to link into post-secondary activities and networks, be they entrepreneurial, educational, or artistic.

As part of authentic learning, students learn the importance of presentation, service, quality, and punctuality—skills they will need in the marketplace. They run their own enterprises, learn self-management, how to develop their ideas, and how to improve their communication and team skills. Students work with business mentors who help them to design a business plan and marketing strategy and deal with the myriad of problems that arise in running a small business. A Year 9 arts group, for example, developed its own business with the help of a local florist. They were taught how to arrange and care for flowers, make flower pots, and promote and sell them. With the help of Australian National another class created a safety video on the potential danger of a local railway crossing. Student enterprises include car wash and garden maintenance programs, manufacture of pavers, and the creation of computer programs, arts events management, and desktop publishing.

Once pedagogy changes in this way, all kinds of unexpected things happen and developments occur that would not be possible in a traditional curriculum. Now educators can notice and respond to students' talents, abilities and interests because the curriculum constantly emerges around these inputs. The emergence of a curriculum centred on the talents of a student is a trend Salisbury High School wants to develop and refine. The curriculum should fit the student, to recognise and extend their talents in a range of settings, rather than the student fit a traditional curriculum framework and not have their needs addressed.

Additionally, based on the principles of regional development and the revitalisation of the regional economic and social infrastructure, an enterprise pathway for all young people is emerging. The objective of this pathway is to develop options for young people in:

- self-employment and small business;
- further education and training;
- employment in other regional enterprises.

Strong industry-school partnerships are key ingredients of this new educational approach. The Salisbury High relationship with British Aerospace Australia illustrates just how successful such a partnership can be. Under a Young Achievement Australia mentoring scheme, 13 of the company's executives are working with the school to help students with projects. School staff have received technical training at British Aerospace Australia. Students have honed their design and planning skills through engineering instruction on site. In other examples, the City of Salisbury has provided substantial in-kind support for the community arts Northwalk Streetscape project. Students have gained valuable insight into the scope and nature of local government and have helped to develop a Youth Policy for the council.

Enterprise learning

Students are individuals. They each have unique ways of thinking and approach learning from different perspectives. In the future, self-directed learning will become more and more important. Most importantly, it is teaching them how to deal with their fears of the

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future; to take positive actions to contribute to and even steer their future directions without fear.

A Youth Enterprise Centre was established by the Northern Metropolitan Youth Association, which provides students with enterprise courses. The courses offer young people a mixture of accredited and non-accredited training, practical enterprise development, and on-the-job experience. The methodology of each course is designed so that it links young people to further education and training and also to employment. The curriculum is based on the principles of key competencies, providing outcomes of learning that are required by industry. This provides young people with the opportunity to transfer skills and abilities they develop to other employment and training opportunities.

Young people now have the opportunity to develop their enterprise potential and work towards the development of their own business. The Youth Enterprise Centre generates a whole range of enterprise concepts and small businesses. Staff assists organisations in the Youth and Training sector to develop the skills and the framework to implement the enterprise curriculum for young people of the region.

The Northern Metropolitan Youth Association has been instrumental in reopening Paralowie House, both as a residential education and training facility, and as a medium to long-term accommodation option for youth in the Salisbury, Playford and Gawler areas. There are self-contained units for shared or individual accommodation. This means that Paralowie House can offer residential education and training facilities, as well as providing accommodation for homeless youth.
The accommodation facility provides a component of emergency accommodation for students needing very temporary assistance, but its primary focus is in the area of medium-term supported accommodation, working closely with the Housing Trust to get young people into secure/affordable long-term housing, providing a stable and secure home base from which to make a career start in life.

The Paralowie House itself, is utilised by the Business Incubator, for activities such as information technology, desktop publishing, video production, classroom/learning activities including food preparation, health and personal dfevelopment, nutrition, budgeting, and so on.

Paralowie House now offers a diversity of enterprise pathways for young people linked to formal education and industry. The Internet Café is combining the heritage of the past with the technology of the future. Young people, most from disadvantaged or homeless backgrounds, have established the Internet Café with associated enterprises in food preparation, hospitality and the Northern Web Site. The Northern Web Site is linked to Salisbury High School and DETAFE, with training accredited through SACE and recognised by TAFE. The young people are keen to make an impression, successfully manage small enterprises, gain experience as café operators, and promote their businesses to the general public.

The *Youth in Business Program* is sponsored by Hotel Care Community project with local hoteliers acting as mentors. The program provides a bridging environment for young people to access and experience the skills and knowledge of the real commercial world. The Northern Metropolitan Youth Association (NMYA) manages a Job Placement, Employment and Training (JPET) project at Paralowie House which provides a case management service to homeless and disadvantaged youth to guide them on a pathway to

further employment and training. The NMYA, which manages much of the work of Paralowie House, is a recognised charity for the homeless and disadvantaged youth of Salisbury community.

Broad principles

The above youth-based approach to regional social and economic development is grounded in some broad principles common to successful national and international experience and best practice.

In summary, they are:

- Youth voice
  For young people to experience a sense of belonging and connectedness, they must feel valued and that their *voice* will be seriously listened to by the powerbrokers. In short they must be empowered.

- Social capital
  High performance communities are those that understand that all human potential must be utilised to the maximum. This implies no underemployment, let alone unemployment of community members; all strengths must be utilised, even if voluntarily. Such communities place emphasis on building networks and establishing trusting relationships as the basis of their social capital. Smart communities such as these do not rely on their physical capital and resources alone, but build up their human capital by skilling their people, and their social capital by developing interconnections.

- High reliability organisations
  A successful community will look to its organisations and ensure that they emphasise reliability in performance. As an example, imagine if every school or training organisation had to be as reliable as an airport traffic control outfit—just as every plane must land safely 100 per cent of the time, every child must experience success at school!

- Partnerships
  A prosperous community will encourage mutually beneficial partnerships between its organisations, whether business or social in nature; collaborative synergies can be generated by looking to cooperatively build community wealth.

- Capability
  All of the above refers to the ability of a community or region to increase its *capacity*—its current ability and future potential. There are common values and ideals that bind and strengthen societies, that allow people to develop resilience, optimism and confidence in their ability to take appropriate action in a changing world. Natural leaders, including young people, have the ability to enable communities to identify their common values and build social capital.

- Lifelong learning/lifelong employability
  No longer is it possible (if it ever was!) to be trained as a young person for a job that lasted for life. Rather, a rapidly changing world and workplace require continuous skilling, updating of knowledge and the ability to grow into new employment areas.

Our knowledge institutions and processes are only just beginning to adjust to these new dynamic conditions and to evolve seamless and distance methods of delivery. They and their leaders will need to be encouraged to take on a more integrated approach to creating learning communities.

- Place management
  Latham (1998) describes a system he calls *place management* that is an attempt to find improved ways of delivering government resources and services. The ineffective *silo* system based on completely separate departments has further disadvantaged rural and remote communities by failing to respond to their needs or timeframes. Progressive governments around the world are all examining new models of better integrating service delivery systems, with the current consensus being towards a local brokerage structure.

Conclusion

Given that there is a crisis of confidence at local community level in rural and urban Australia, added to the sense of uncertainty at all levels of government on how else to deal with regional economic development issues, particularly those affecting young people and morale, there has never been a more propitious time for regional leaders to seize the initiative.

International experience suggests that investment in and encouragement of local civic entrepreneurs and natural leaders, to focus the community on building capability and social capital, is the most likely recipe for success and prosperity.

This chapter points to the future and the place of young people within the region as the most galvanising and uniting focus for rural and regional communities. Indeed, the very energy, creativity and vitality of local young people can provide another under-utilised resource to catalyse further economic and social activity.

Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world—indeed, it's the only thing that ever has! ... Margaret Mead

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This chapter contains elements of research and consultation carried out and documented by the authors in collaboration with Martin van Tijn (Department State Development), David Eldridge (Salvation Army) and Johanna Wyn (and Colleagues from the Youth Research Centre, University of Melbourne).

CHAPTER 18
What does the business sector get out of investment in communities?

Marc Bowles

Using information from real examples this chapter examines how community partnerships hold, create, and add value for businesses. Indicators of return on investment will be drawn from examples of partnerships revolving around knowledge and learning.

The sources of information for this chapter include one of Australia's largest companies. This company has trialled and adopted components of performance and learning systems that embrace 'learning community' models. It has also been implemented at an internal, intra-organisational, and at a regional level (Woolworths 1998; Bowles 1998; Bowles 1997a).

As other chapters in this book study models for regional partnerships, this chapter will simply explore learning communities as one form of collaborative architectures built by individuals, groups, an organisation, and multiple organisations to forge meaning, purpose, and commitment towards a shared future.

This chapter will highlight how knowledge and learning are a basis for communities to forge sustainable collaborative partnerships with business. How well partnerships enable, stabilise, and sustain relationships between the community and business players will also determine how well business can manage knowledge capital and build unique competitive advantage. Overall performance improvement can be manipulated to provide an immediate and attractive basis for a business to invest in any collaborative partnership. However other advantages must be addressed if sustainable improvement and performance are to be generated through any such partnership.

Building community-business collaborative architectures

Over the last decades of the 20th century businesses have increasingly explored the management of individuals as a capital resource. The move has been from the Industrial Age when individuals were simply a factor of production, to the Knowledge Age where increased emphasis has been placed on how individuals contribute towards organisational agility and strategic capabilities. In the Knowledge Age businesses need to develop and harness an individual's capabilities to achieve competitive advantage. The aim for any organisation in such an era is to accelerate knowledge acquisition and its transfer to productive outcomes. One strategy a business or any organisation can pursue to achieve this end is to build a learning community.

A learning community is used to denote individuals or organisations cooperating through planned relationships and networks (collaborative architecture) to promote actions and learning processes that achieve mutual advantage. However, business can gain enormous benefits from participating in a learning community.

What does the strategic approach to a learning community look like?

By using the term 'strategic' we are referring to the learning community being tied to purpose and not to processes. Strategic frameworks help all those involved in the management of a process respond to changes while ensuring fundamental activities are performed to the required standard.

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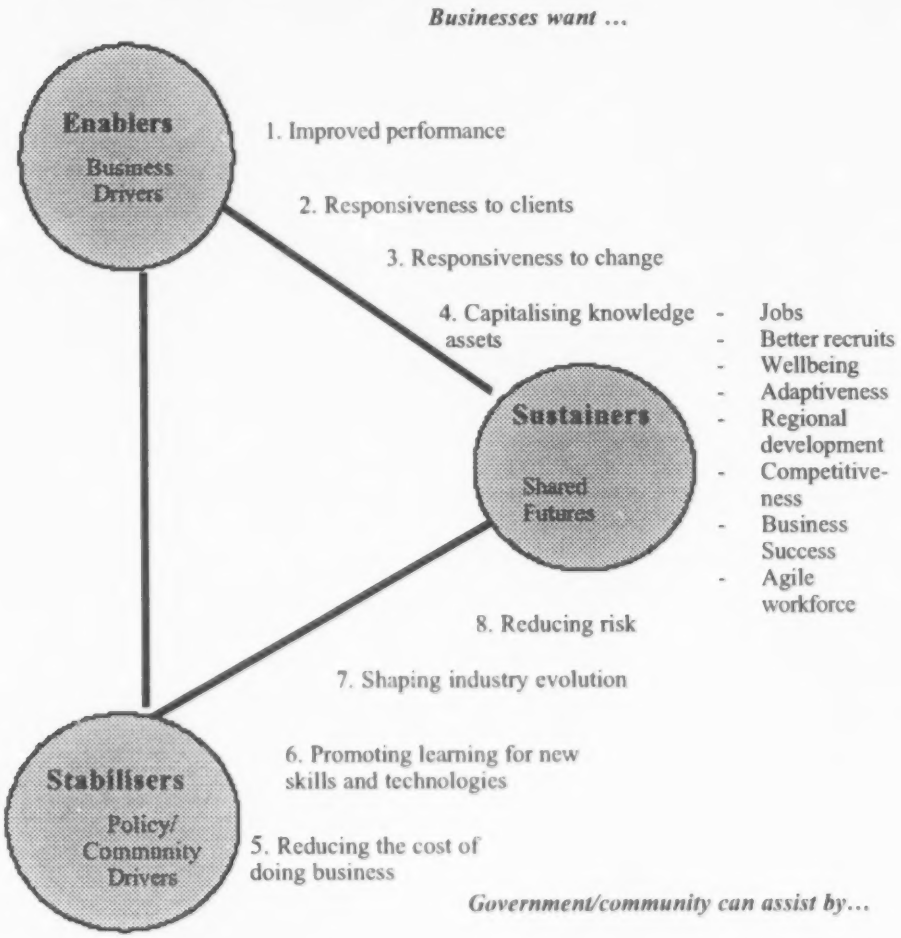
The fundamental reasons for cooperation really revolves around the eight drivers identified in Figure 1. These drivers are sorted to *enable* enterprise participation and cooperation and how key players can *stabilise* how businesses achieve greater competitive advantage. Collaboration must be based on, and measured by the shared outcomes all parties in the process seek to achieve through implementation *(sustainers)*. In effect, indicators of business success are one measure of successful collaboration. It should be recognised that shared indicators need to be derived that mesh business indicators with those indicators that other participants are motivated to achieve.

Figure 1: Learning Community Framework



Source: Bowles 1997b, p. 137; Slocum & Lei 1993, p. 298.

Constructing learning communities that are tied to achievement of mutual advantage for participants is not a denial that other purposes or advantages may be derived by

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membership in the community. Equally, one needs to be very careful that construction of these partnerships is not oriented only towards indicators that business may 'value'.

What enables business participation?

While the types of indicators chosen by a learning community may vary, there is advantage in aligning these with indicators business partners may consider important. The measures business uses to indicate the success of a community-business partnership will vary depending on purpose.

For community partnerships that wish to secure business commitment, the immediate advantage of using indicators synergistic with the business needs is the tying of the partnerships to a shared senses of purpose. Collaboration is measured, at least in part, by indicators managers already link to business success.

Enabler 1: Improved performance

The first major enabler for business involvement in community partnerships is improved performance. This is a Damoclese sword for those constructing partnership frameworks. On one hand the advantages are the commitment to assist improve business outcomes. On the other hand many businesses have a very short-term view of business performance and lack the strategic perspective necessary to see beyond task or process improvement. For those constructing learning and knowledge based partnerships, this can warp the target business sets for 'successful' relationships. Equally, if more than one business partner is involved in the collaboration the focus can shift between short-term demands made by each organisation for performance benefits the learning community cannot collectively reconcile nor prioritise.

To establish indicators that span a number of businesses the collaborative partners need to set benchmarks. In Australia, as in many overseas countries (e.g. New Zealand, United Kingdom, Malaysia, Singapore, Sweden, South Africa), industry-devised competency standards have been widely used to establish an independent benchmark for the training and assessment of individuals to achieve workplace performance outcomes. This benchmark standard is also very attractive as competencies are designed to be achieved across variables that may include the person, location, work context, technology, and task mix for a particular job.

Nevertheless, a focus on competencies relating to tasks or even job performance narrows the scope of learning to training relating to the skills and knowledge that deliver immediate job performance outcomes. Such a focus may be too narrow a basis to encompass all the indicators of benefit business may derive from collaborating with a wider community to enhance learning.

Let us examine one example where value adding to existing human resource activities occurs through collaborative partnership for entry-level training. In this case the school-workplace programs helped reduce the costs of doing business in four major areas, including:

- recruitment
- selection
- succession and employee retention
- training and assessment activities.

Table 1: Indicators of Business Return on Investment in a Learning Community

Benefits of training	Indicated by
Improved performance	Productivity increase Increased sales (higher comparative sales revenue) 'Better' quality product/service Reduced variations (waste and error rate reduced) Improved ratio of labour cost to production/service costs
Improved attitude, motivation	Improved job satisfaction Improved work attitude or workforce/teams Decreased absenteeism Reduced staff turnover
Replacing or integrating 'traditional' HRD tools	Integration of, or reduced completion costs for: • skills audits • skills analysis • training needs analysis • performance appraisals • recruitment and succession planning
Agility of the workforce	Adaptability or responsiveness of workforce to market opportunities Responsiveness to customer demands More rapid adoption of innovations, work practices, new technology Improved skill levels–individuals, teams, occupations, etc. Overall advances in the skills and knowledge held by the workforce
Reduced staff replacement costs	Mobility of existing staff to vacant jobs (part time, casual and full time) Cost of retraining and recruitment reduced Number of potential recruits (entry-level recruitment pool) Staff retention, promotion and term of employment (by commencement age and employment level or area) Volume of part time/casual staff moving into full-time jobs
Reduced costs of recruitment, selection and succession planning	Improved recruitment Targeted selection to 'match' an individual to a job Better matching of training to individual job and career needs Self-assessment against competencies required for a position Retention rates for individuals (time and percentage) Reduced absenteeism Improved relationship between promotion and learning completed
Improved customer service	Improved customer satisfaction Reduction in (surveyed) complaints Service ethic/climate (survey)
Present net worth of human capital	Increase in human capital asset value Decrease in expenditure required to maintain capability of workforce to meet performance demands Reduced expenditure on the contracting of external expertise Staff compliance with all legal and legislative requirements (i.e. cost of non-compliance can incur operational loss/costs)

Source: OTFE 1997, pp. 3–4; Woolworths 1997, pp. 12–13.

Training and assessed outcomes are one aspect of the benefits business gain from participation in these learning communities. Evidence from learning communities that focus on school-workplace programs indicates that such programs work better for enterprises with existing performance systems that have the capacity to measure how training contributes to bottom-line outcomes (Bowles 1998, p. 12). However, enterprises do not have to have such a system in place to derive benefits from partnerships in school-workplace or learning communities.

One employer conducted an 18-month project from mid-1996 to late 1997 to determine measures for evaluating performance improvement gained through competency-based traineeships completed with young people still at school.

Performance indicators used by business will vary greatly. For community-business partnerships involving alliances based on learning, the indicators can be extrapolated from Table 1.

Enablers 2 and 3: Responsiveness to clients and responsiveness to change

Organisations and managers utilise a range of strategies to achieve responsiveness to markets and customers. Some organisations are operating in stable developed markets with little threat of new competition, and therefore have everything to lose and little to gain by implementing new structures or practices.

Individual managers in traditional organisational structures are given little reward for challenging the order of things. Such organisations place little value on learning, or how the collaborative architecture needs to be managed to enhance learning that improves responsiveness to change or to emerging demands that will necessitate change.

Organisations whose core business is in the area of information technology and those operating across a range of environmental conditions and market places, have to be more adaptive than those in traditional manufacturing and closed markets. Organisations, whether they be large global corporations such as Microsoft, Shell International, Kodak, and Intel, or small to medium enterprises operating in highly localised markets, all have to learn to cope with a rapidly changing environment. As larger companies absorb markets traditionally held by small businesses the way small business managers operate has also had to change.

This management of knowledge has important foundations in how well, and how quickly companies can translate learning into outcomes. Achieving strategic outcomes requires learning and knowledge management that improves *both* current performance and the capacity to meet future strategic imperatives.

The ability to generate new knowledge through learning processes is critical to any organisation seeking to build unique competitive advantage (McGill, Slocum & Lei 1992). Organisational learning can be managed to enhance the depth, speed, and breadth of learning (Redding 1997). In environments where change is rapid and sustained, the ability to just adapt and 'cope' with change is an insufficient basis for assuring business survival. The ability to be responsive and to seize emerging opportunities created through the change process may be the basis for competitiveness.

Responsiveness is embedded in how well individuals and the organisation can learn. This suggests learning needs to be continuous, not necessarily continual. Even for the largest organisations, the resourcing of such frameworks is expensive and very risky.

Fundamentally the creation of business-community partnerships for many corporations has eventuated because of a desire to source improved future recruits, to influence education structures, and to promote lifelong learning in society. While this can serve to meet immediate performance imperatives, it is motivated by a longer-term need to link competitive advantage with resources and knowledge frameworks only societies can build and maintain.

The message to collaborative partners outside the business is to embrace the longer-term purpose for the relationship. Learning communities are partnerships that actually provide opportunities for individual and collective learning. Learning becomes much more than an intervention controlled and targeted towards training for performance or adapting actions to meet performance ends; it is a strategic capability that improves bottom-line outcomes *as well as* the competitiveness of individuals, groups, regions and businesses (Calvert, Mobley & Marshall 1994).

Enabler 4: Capitalising knowledge assets

The management of knowledge capital is a much talked about, rarely understood aspect of modern management. Let's challenge current thinking by sorting knowledge capital in three different categories:

- *Human capital* where knowledge resides in people and their 'collective expertise, creative and problem solving capability, leadership, entrepreneurial and managerial skills' (Brooking 1999, p. 21).

- *Infrastructural capital* which is a broad category of assets that contribute to how an organisation conducts business; such as processes, financial relationships, communication systems, information systems, philosophies, and financial structures (Brooking 1999).

- *Social capital* which resides in networks and relationships that guide interaction between individuals and the management of societal networks that can impact group, regional, community, social, and organisational outcomes (Woolcock 1998).

The aim for any business is to manage this knowledge to achieve strategic ends. For competitive businesses this ultimately means absorbing, transferring and expanding knowledge for productive purposes, in a manner that a competitor cannot replicate. This means escaping the Industrial Age mind-set of controlling and organising knowledge through its allocation into jobs that meet defined functions, to the Knowledge Age imperative to manage knowledge to meet ever-changing strategic ends that cannot be controlled by an organisation's structure of work.

The three types of capital require different strategies to manage the development and transferral of knowledge to individuals generating productive outcomes. Equally, ownership of knowledge will vary. While infrastructural knowledge capital is mainly constituted by explicit knowledge that can be owned by an organisation, ownership of

most human and all social knowledge capital resides with the individual or their interactions.

Table 2: Collaborating to build specific types of knowledge capital

Types of knowledge capital	Examples	Community actions to enhance
Infrastructural	Intellectual property Processes Systems Philosophy Customer goodwill Partnerships Professional skills Craftsmanship Funding bodies support for activities Procedural manuals Training courses/ manuals Process flow charts Design specifications Technology Individual customer/ service relationships Service strategies Strategic vision Strategic plans Systems architecture Market research	Proximity to the market-place Encourage technological know-how in region to support businesses Link suppliers and buyers and customers in innovative projects Promote community projects that harness collective expertise Audit industry capabilities required for specific markets in a region and tie local infrastructure to support these capabilities Establish regional visions that reinforce industry capabilities Ensure government and public service providers reinforce a culture of service and commitment to business Mechanisms to match competent individuals to a job Reduced 'red tape' Become a customer/market for the local businesses
Human	Competencies Experience Commitment Craftsmanship Working relationship with bodies/ people external to the firm Individual commitment Value statements Participative planning processes Shared visions Service ethic	Expand pools of competent individuals Audit required industry competencies and map available individual competencies in region Expand experience of individuals Encourage 'right attitude' in individual recruits Promote community values that parallel business values Undertake action and experiential learning in schools or in the community
Social	Culture Social network Wellbeing Cross-links between macro-planning processes (planning across economic, technological, regional, employment etc.) Community support Political stability Personal links with suppliers Shared commitment Shared purpose	Promote political stability Encourage civic pride Identify new markets and community opportunities Identify factors that generate wellbeing in the community Community awareness of collective needs and future imperatives Expand competencies or capabilities tied to wellbeing indicators that impact productive purposes Harness diversity and divergence Credibility—history of businesses support/good governance

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For many authors writing on intellectual capital, corporate wisdom, or enhancement of knowledge capital, a business's competitive advantage lies in how quickly it absorbs, transfers, and expands knowledge. This is more than entering into partnerships or building learning frameworks that enhance explicit knowledge found in the skills and knowledge required for competent performance (Brooking 1999). It reinforces learning communities as one strategy able to generate and source tacit knowledge held by individuals or groups inside *and* outside the organisation. These networks also hold social capital value.

Table 2 indicates the tangible relationship between building human and infrastructural capital knowledge and productive outcomes. In hierarchically-structured organisations trying to control all factors of production to improve bottom-line results, the concept of social capital represents a real challenge. It may, for instance, reside in indicators such as 'wellbeing' that are still in the early stages of being tied to business competitive advantage (Rose 1999; Falk & Harrison 1998). This makes it both difficult to build, but incredibly valuable if harnessed by a business because, unlike infrastructural capital and many aspects of human capital, social capital is context-specific and hard for any competitor to replicate.

What stabilises business participation?

Collaborative structures with business are not just about adding value to businesses in a specific community. They are also about supporting efforts to attract new businesses and keeping businesses in a community.

Stabiliser 5: Reducing the cost of doing business

The ongoing participation of businesses in community partnerships can be realised by assisting them to reduce their immediate cost of doing business. In simple, if somewhat crass terms, this means ensuring participation has an impact on the bottom-line.

As previously indicated this can become a Damocles sword hanging over the proverbial head of the collaborative structure. The balance is to assist enhanced bottom-line results while instilling a longer-term perspective on the reasons for the collaborative structures. Participating in the partnership can actually be constructed and reported to emphasise reductions in the cost of doing business.

While stressing businesses should be discouraged from structuring processes to just access available funding, it makes sound business sense to access available funding where it reduces the costs incurred in undertaking normal business activities.

Reporting on cost-of-doing business outcomes can also reinforce that the learning community (or any such collaborative architecture) is set on building capital value for the business, beyond human capital derived from recruiting or accessing competent people. It is also about creating access to a source of knowledge that can structure learning to actually attract funding or off-set business costs (i.e. infrastructural capital) and to create interactions that stimulate the generation of solutions that business and community members can access (i.e. social capital).

Stabiliser 6: Promoting learning for new skills and technologies

Strategic alliances should enhance the learning and transfer of new skills and technology between partners. Learning can also be framed in areas where enterprises have yet to acquire expertise, e.g. community partnership that promotes action or project-based experiences that permit the exchange of information and learning. Such learning can target areas where businesses, especially smaller businesses, cannot afford to develop knowledge or undertake structured learning

Stabiliser 7: Shaping industry evolution

Strategic alliances can identify learning needs and develop interactions whereby businesses can gain insight into future industry evolution and personnel can access the knowledge necessary to exploit this evolution. These strategies may also enable future or embryonic industry activities to occur through a learning community that actively promotes the specific knowledge and skills required to attract or embrace new economic activities (Clegg et al. 1995; Slocum & Lei 1993).

Stabiliser 8: Reducing risk

As costs of production and product development increase, the motivation to form alliances that reduce financial and planning risk also increases. These alliances become even more attractive if they further reduce risk by off setting the financial commitments required to achieve current productivity. In technology-based industries or those involving complex processes of service and product delivery, the diversity of skills and technology promote the desire to form partnerships that redistribute risk (Slocum & Lei 1993). Partnerships with a community can:

- Maximise resource utilisation in order to forge more sustainable programs.
- Build relationships and networks with businesses or individuals in order to better integrate supply, distribution or sales chains.
- Build programs in emerging job areas and where job growth trends are reported.
- Assist to build structures for transferring codified (explicit) knowledge between organisations and across organisations (e.g. competency-based industry training).
- Impede the fragmentation of effort by players that threatens any systems solutions to problems impacting the conduct of business within the community (whether it be a geographic, purpose driven, or virtual setting).

Fundamentally the sense of partnership and the construct of collaborative architectures can permit businesses to better manage risk. These outcomes may be individual or collective. They may have a local or global (beyond the local geographic location) impact. The learning community model purely provides architecture that is a low-risk option in which to become involved, while offering ongoing opportunities for risk sharing.

Sustainers: The value of purpose and commitment to shared futures

Unless a clear rationale and direction is derived it should be anticipated that individuals in any collaborative partnership would feel defensive, distrustful, unmotivated, or even resist the promotion of shared outcomes.

Business and regional development, and community issues exist in such a dynamic relationship. Variables impacting the purpose for collaborative partnerships need to be

addressed at the community level. Learning community structures illustrate how flexible structures can be constructed. However the development of indicators that sustain community-business partnerships must be contextual to that community and its shared sense of purpose. The indicators of sustainability, or what Figure 1 depicts as shared futures, must extend well beyond task, process, and even short-term business imperatives. The indicators need to continually move as participative structures redefine collective purpose.

For many businesses the immediate basis for collaboration is the removal of barriers that limit performance. For instance, a number of barriers can be identified as impinging upon employers' confidence in school-workplace learning programs.

- Students assessed as competent for a job are job-ready, but not competent to perform in 'my' workplace.
- Training costs outweigh the return on investment.
- Tools are too complex and oriented to training, not business needs.
- The national vocational education and training process is too complex, impossible to shape to business imperatives, and in a state of constant change.
- Structured competency-based training requires time and cost commitments that fall outside core business activities (i.e. it is an additional impost on the business).
- National competency standards in Training Packages and supporting learning resources are too generic and do not reflect the unique performance that supports an enterprise's unique competitive advantages.

When commencing implementation of competency-based training systems, Woolworths overlaid its partnerships with community organisations and education and training providers with critical HR Key Performance Indicators. The benchmarks used to measure overall success of the program from 1994–1998 were:

- increase staff retention;
- improved career pathways and identified progression points from school-based employees to management;
- return on investment from training;
- reduce cost of doing business;
- targeting of training to priorities and funds to improve store performance in terms of bottom-line budget results, and
- shift training from a benign to performance-based activity to an activity-shaping behaviour that delivers service standards (Woolworths 1997, p. 3).

True measures of success need to be more durable and indicate targets that are meaningful for all participants in the collaborative relationships. They need to motivate, elicit commitment, and promote advantage to all players through mutual effort. The participants in their specific context can only derive such indicators. Fundamentally a 'community' that takes ownership of the process required to build collaborative architectures has created something as important as the outcomes they can achieve. As such, the following are only a guide to what shared futures could entail. Each could, in turn, guide how indicators listed earlier in the chapter are chosen and measures set.

Table 3: The basis for setting indicators derived from shared futures

Area	Examples of areas for setting indicators
Employment measures	Job creation Recruitment targets Percentage of employment by age, occupations, etc.
Wellbeing indicators	Job security Ecological health of region Freedom from harm Levels of stress Climate for change
Adaptiveness	Ability to meet emerging market needs with current workforce Depth and breadth of available learning in the region Available knowledge assets in the region
Regional development measures	Levels of disposable income
Competitiveness	Profit margins Comparative industry or regional benchmarks Best practice analysis and comparison
Retention of businesses within a region	Numbers retained Number of families associated with a business/industry leaving a region
Workforce agility	Transferability of capabilities within existing 'pool' of labour across industry sectors

Conclusion

Building learning communities with business have tended to re-emphasise the importance of focusing on how the business is making an investment decision that will translate learning activities into applied performance improvement. This chapter has argued this focus as a necessary but too narrow a basis for building sustainable business-community collaborative architectures.

Collaborative partnerships that espouse value of learning need to set indicators that extend beyond task or job performance within a specific workplace context. This is not devaluing performance indicators that can be contextualised to measure the development of the individual and improved productivity. Such indicators are critical short-term stepping stones. They 'sell in' the value of a partnership, in lieu of convincing managers that the long-term performance value resides in investing in a partnership that provides the framework and resources necessary to accelerate organisational learning, and to generate the responsiveness necessary to secure customer and market opportunities.

The value of collaborative relationships in promoting different types of knowledge capital—infrastructural, human and social—is not well understood by businesses in Australia. Some larger corporations are building knowledge or learning communities conscious of the need to invest in partnerships that promote the speed, depth, and breadth of learning and the transfer of knowledge. However, the inherent value to a business of participating in collaborative frameworks that promote social and human knowledge capital that resides in individuals and networks existing outside the organisation are, at best, poorly understood.

The triggers for business involvement in collaborative architectures that involve the local community must differentiate short-term and longer-term indicators or benefits. This requires an acknowledgment that business and government agencies currently focus on short-term performance improvement. This can be achieved through strategies that reduce

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the cost of doing business. However, this strategy must be part of the overall effort to build sustainable competitive advantage.

Triggering business involvement is more than commitment to short-term benefits. It is about building frameworks that enable and sustain partnerships and create a mechanism whereby business, the community, and individuals can access and leverage knowledge to achieve their preferred futures.

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CHAPTER 19
Learning, change and sustainability: Exploring the learning processes of pastoralist stakeholders in the tropical savannas

Allan Arnott and Rebecca Benson

A number of issues emerge when reviewing notions of education and communication as they impact on rural industries in the tropical savannas. For example, it is perceived that some difficulty exists in communication between landholders in rural industries, government departments, and other research centres. This chapter reports on a research project which aims to identify, describe, and share knowledge and understanding of some of the learning processes of pastoralists in the tropical savannas. It does this by investigating how they go about learning and change. Such learning processes include experiential and informal learning, formal training, and engaging in information technologies.

Introduction

It is essential that sustainability is at the core of development and land use management practices in the tropical savannas. Such diverse land uses include the mining, pastoral and tourism industries, management of Aboriginal land, and conservation and defence interests. The tropical savanna region takes in much of northern Australia, including the Kimberley of Western Australia, the Top End of the Northern Territory, and the gulf and peninsula country of North Queensland. The region is characterised by its vast area and the small population living within it.

For many, in an effort to enhance the economic, ecological, and social sustainability of land use practices, working towards sustainability in the region means rethinking current ways of doing things. It may be necessary to change elements of practice as a result, which will often require some form of learning to occur in order to make such changes. The link between learning and sustainability is, therefore, an important one. The following pages describe a research project aimed at a particular group of stakeholders in the tropical savannas. This research endeavours to explore the ways in which a group of pastoralists in this region learn and manage change. The way this occurs is likely to have implications for sustainability in the region.

Sustainability in the tropical savanna region

The concept of regional sustainability in the tropical savannas refers in part to the prevention of land degradation and resource depletion from land use. However, other important requirements for sustainability include the development of an economic base that can create an ongoing income for its population. It is also about the development of strong communities, through social interaction and development of networks, which live and work in the region as a result of its industries and land uses. Such communities form part of the identity of a region, and are vital for its sustainability. It is essential to consider all three aspects—the social, economic and ecological, when talking about sustainability. To overlook ecological issues is to risk degradation of natural resources. Land degradation is significant for those industries that depend on land use for their survival. Without an ongoing economic base, it becomes difficult for communities to be sustained in the region. Ramifications would be evident both in Australia and internationally were the tropical savannas to become an unsustainable region. Some

examples include the defence of the northern coastline, support and infrastructure for Aboriginal communities and homelands, the management of areas such as Kakadu National Park and revenue generated for domestic and export markets from the mining and pastoral industries.

As such, the Tropical Savannas Cooperative Research Centre (TSCRC) was established to conduct research and education to further the sustainable development and management of the tropical savannas. The Centre aims to conduct its activities in partnership with its stakeholders—the land user groups mentioned above.

Sustainability, learning and change

It is often argued that change is necessary for sustainability, as achieving sustainability is likely to require reassessing current management practices, in particular where such practices are connected to industries based on land and natural resource use. This could include, for example, examining how efficiently an industry operates, how 'ecologically friendly' an industry is, and how well the industry is contributing to the ongoing employment of people in the region. Learning plays an important role in enhancing informed decision-making, and expanding understanding and awareness of the issues surrounding sustainability. Other aspects of learning, such as how effectively people engage in and process it, are also fundamental aspects of learning and sustainability.

It is from this recognition of the link between learning and sustainability that a TSCRC research project about learning has been developed. The project aims to explore learning processes of the stakeholders in the tropical savannas. By doing this a picture can be constructed of what stimulates people to learn, how they go about learning, and what changes may result from learning. Such a picture will help the TSCRC to focus its education program, and the educational materials and other information to come out of the Centre, so that it more effectively meets the needs of stakeholders.

The research has focused on the pastoral industry stakeholder group; in particular cattle producers on family owned non-Aboriginal stations in the tropical savannas. (Other producers such as Aboriginal-owned and company properties could be the focus of further research.) Cattle production is a prevalent and widespread form of land use in the tropical savannas. Pastoralism contributes to the regional economy; the industry has also created infrastructure, employment, and the development of communities in the region, despite the isolation (Taylor & Braithwaite 1996). However, from an ecological perspective, it is often a contentious form of land use, due to differing perceptions of the contribution of the industry to land degradation in the region. Therefore pastoralism is a significant form of land use in terms of social, economic and ecological sustainability, and thus pastoralists are an important group with which to explore learning.

Learning and communication issues

It has become well understood that a great deal of learning occurs in the workplace (Marsick & Watkins 1990). Such learning often involves informal and incidental learning, of particular interest with regard to the research with the pastoralist stakeholders. Learning is also connected to broader issues of communication, information use and access, and understanding between people. With regard to the pastoralist stakeholder group of the tropical savannas, there are several such connections.

There is recognition that communication issues often exist between landholders and the government departments and research organisations that produce information for them

(Hartley 1991). For example, landholders are dissatisfied with management research that is irrelevant to their needs. They are often bombarded with too much information from research, often presented in unsuitable or unusable forms. The knowledge and experience of the landholder is often overlooked, and from a research perspective, there is frustration that results of research are not applied. Landholders may decide not to apply the results of research for various reasons, but this is often interpreted by some researchers as an unwillingness or inability to learn (Vanclay 1992). A number of these communication issues exist in the interaction between the TSCRC and pastoralists in the tropical savannas. This research will aim to address some of these broader issues by way of its exploration of learning processes.

The research

The intention of the research was to explore how members of the pastoralist stakeholder group are stimulated to learn, and how they go about learning and gaining the required information and knowledge to achieve their learning outcomes. As such, the study had a number of objectives. These ranged from establishing what initiates participants on a learning episode, to understanding the form that the process of learning takes, and to reviewing issues and barriers associated with the learning process. Important in this approach was establishing whom the pastoralists access and how they access information to assist in their learning progress. It was hoped that by better understanding and mapping such learning processes and activities, a range of insights and directions would emerge to further facilitate and support communication between stakeholders. Such information may also provide a challenge to some of the stereotyping that occurs.

Using in-depth, semi-structured interviews, the researchers from organisations across the tropical savannas, worked with pastoralists in the Kimberley of Western Australia, the Victoria River District of the Northern Territory, and the Mareeba District, North Queensland. The interviews were based on incidents from practice, often focussing on a scenario depicting a stimulus to learning, based on a recent change to the interviewee's property or practice. The interviewees often provided a story that described such aspects as the stimulus to change, how it was actioned, the steps taken to achieve the outcomes, problems encountered, and where information was sought. In this way each interview became a story of how these pastoralists perceived and managed change. They also provided clear pathways describing the learning patterns and processes on which they embarked or on which they were engaged.

Emerging outcomes

It is important at this point to indicate that the research is still in progress. However, information has been collected and is in the process of analysis. As such, a number of tentative outcomes can be put forward. These outcomes provide a perspective on the learning processes and the way in which this group of pastoralists manages change.

Results from this research, which will be of interest to educators and service providers, supply a number of insights into the learning and associated change processes adopted by pastoralists who participated in the study. As a generalisation, the pastoralists involved in the study saw themselves as 'risk-takers', unafraid of changing aspects of their property or the operations of their property. The context of pastoralists in the tropical savannas is also quite complex. It is largely a geographically 'harsh' region and pastoralists tolerate isolation and the inevitable drought, floods or fire. Often they may be more engaged in economic survival, rather than particular issues of sustainability. Thus, while generally

keen to maintain the sustainability of their properties, they do not feel that they can necessarily carry the economic burden of doing so.

In terms of some of the outcomes of the study, pastoralists confirmed that they gain information from a wide range of sources, including scientific papers, field days, courses and 'experts'. However, for a number of reasons, the ideas and information they gain from these sources may not be adopted either immediately or in full. Pastoralists may begin a learning process that will lead to change, but it may take some time to 'operationalise' the accumulated knowledge.

The fact that the pastoralist may not adopt a recommended practice in full also impacts on change and learning processes. There was a strong belief amongst the participating pastoralists that their properties are distinctive to the point of being unique. These pastoralists tended to see their situation in isolation and as theirs alone, and that no solution that has worked elsewhere will necessarily work on their property. Thus, they see a need to trial and adapt any practice to suit them. As discussed below, this point has particular implications for service providers and others who expect ideas or products to have 'universal' appeal and to be fully applied.

Factors such as the accumulation of information, a desire to trial elements of practice before accepting large-scale change, and not necessarily accepting all aspects of a change, may mean that the implementation of new practices takes place over a prolonged period of time. Such a period of time may be more related to the time required for the producer to consider how the new information will be incorporated into the whole property management system, while accounting for financial constraints. Once adoption of the new techniques is undertaken, this often occurs in steps, in order to minimise risk and spread capital inputs.

The study also highlighted the importance and the effectiveness of the informal learning processes in which pastoralists engage. These included the use of family and other networks, seeking out of 'experts' for advice, trial and error, and membership of small groups. The study demonstrated that pastoralists often accessed formal and structured education/training courses. However, it also demonstrated that the accumulation of knowledge and the stimulus for change mostly occurred through less tangible and more informal means. While this may not be surprising in itself, it is important that such practices are understood, respected, and also incorporated into programs designed to support pastoralists' learning opportunities and processes. An element of these pastoralists' informal and incidental learning processes was a continual 'diagnosing' of their contexts. Often a decision to learn and/or adopt change was the noting of difference in their contexts (which reinforces the individualistic position taken by these pastoralists).

Further, the interviewed pastoralists also indicated a strong preference for one-to-one contact with education/training/service providers (although in general they understand the financial constraints affecting such services at present). This point may well be connected to both the use of networks based on developed personal relationships, and to the pastoralists' perceptions of the unique nature of their properties.

Implications for regional sustainability

From the above outcomes it is possible to highlight implications for sustainability in the tropical savanna region. For example, as outlined in the previous section the context of the pastoral industry in the tropical savanna region is one of economic survival in difficult

conditions. In general, the pastoralists interviewed were aware that it was beneficial to them that their properties were sustainably developed, and many were taking action in this way. However, many believe the cost of such measures cannot and should not be taken on by individual producers. A major issue concerning regional sustainability is thus balancing the ecological and the economic, and coming to conclusions about whom is prepared to pay for the necessary measures. If sustainability is an issue that affects the broader community then the question raised is, 'should that broader community (and government) be prepared to share the costs?'

Another implication for sustainability that emerged from the above discussion, concerned the dual points of length of time that may be taken to make decisions on change, and the pastoralists' perspective of the uniqueness of the properties. Adaptation of ideas takes time, often revolves around the accumulation of information, the knowledge of their properties, and a range of other contextual factors. The timing of such changes tend to be very individualistic. It is arguable then that a 'one size fits all' program/course mentality will not be greatly effective. Similarly, a coercive 'top down' approach (unless legislated) will have questionable returns. Long-term, flexible, easily accessed programs would appear to be a more effective option. In support of these points, the outcomes concerning the importance of informal learning processes and pastoralists' preference for dealing with people on a one-to-one basis, suggests that contact built on the development of relationships is also crucial.

Conclusion

There is a strong case to put that there is an important link between ensuring and maintaining sustainable development of the tropical savanna region, and how land managers learn and manage change. This chapter has described the background to, structure of, and potential outcomes from a research project being carried out with a number of pastoralists in the tropical savannas. The study is providing a number of directions that are potentially useful to a range of interests including those who are connected directly to the pastoralist 'effort' and to wider community interests. Issues of sustainable land development impact on most Australians, and understanding how such stakeholders live and learn can only benefit the various interests involved. It is important to understand not only the context in which stakeholder groups are situated, but to understand that there are ways of working with that group so that 'common' learning processes might be made more effective. It is also important that communication between stakeholders, the government, and educators remain open. Knowing the ways in which landholders such as the tropical savanna pastoralists learn and manage change can only help communication between these landholders and the broader community, and thus enhance efforts towards a sustainable future for the region.

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CHAPTER 20
Learning partnerships in the workplace

Jo Balatti

In this chapter I describe how a learning community in a remote mine site successfully developed literacy and other communication skills of employees. Collaboration between the Tropical North Queensland Institute of TAFE and mine management produced a peer tutoring model that was successfully implemented in a work site that had thwarted all previous attempts in meeting those same communication training needs. Eighteen months after the project began, I interviewed managers, TAFE personnel, and program participants. This chapter discusses why the peer-tutoring program was introduced, how it was implemented, and why it worked. As an unexpected bonus, the tutoring program proved to be a catalyst for learning experiences and partnerships that extended beyond what had been envisaged.

Introduction

To transform enterprises into learning organisations companies and trainers are developing the capabilities of employees to enhance their own learning and that of their co-workers. The learning organisation has been defined by many (Burgoyne, Pedler & Boydell 1994; Kline & Saunders 1993; Senge 1992), but the following definition by Watkins and Marsick (1993) captures its fundamental property:

> The learning organisation is one that learns continuously and transforms itself. Learning takes place in individuals, teams, the organisation, and even the communities with which the organisation interacts. Learning is a continuous, strategically used process—integrated with, and running parallel to, work ... The learning organisation has embedded systems to capture and share learning (p. 8).

In this framework, learning is both a collaborative and an individual pursuit that is meshed with the everyday activity of the workplace. Peer tutoring along with mentoring and coaching, are learning arrangements that help operationalise this notion of learning (Balatti, Edwards & Andrew 1997). These strategies facilitate the transfer of knowledges and skills that already exist within the company, as well as those introduced via training and other professional development experiences.

Structured peer-tutoring programs comprise learning partnerships usually between two colleagues. Peer tutoring is often part of a training program designed to develop specific vocational skills beyond the duration of the training course. It comprises a set of aims, some initial training for tutors and less commonly for tutees, a protocol for matching each pair, and procedures for monitoring the results. Critiques and evaluations of peer tutoring programs are often in terms of these components.

But the success of the peer-tutor relationship is also dependent on other learning partnerships that are operating in the organisation. It is from this perspective that I discuss the peer-tutoring component of a communication-training program introduced in a gold mine.

Background

Red Dome was a remote gold mine site operating on a 24-hour, fly-in fly-out basis with 12-hour shifts and seven-day rosters. The workforce had been downsized and almost all of

the 120 employees lived on-site in company provided accommodation. These conditions made training programs difficult to design and implement, with time release and continuity being the most difficult issues.

Prior to the collaboration with the Workplace Communication Unit of the Tropical North Queensland Institute of TAFE, the company's previous attempts at negotiating literacy training with outside organisations had been unsuccessful. Available packages had been either incompatible with the Red Dome working conditions or inconsistent with the company's overarching training strategy.

This communications training program was delivered by an enterprise-based teacher and trained peer tutors. All participants were volunteers. It targeted individual needs in the Red Dome context while being consistent with the company's aim to self-manage as much of its training as possible.

The enterprise-based teacher spent two to three days a week on site. She promoted the program, analysed company and individual communication needs, interviewed all prospective participants, and delivered the training. She trained employees who wished to complete the requirements of a Vocational Education Training and Employment Commission (VETEC) adult literacy training course and thus become accredited literacy tutors, and she also provided training to employees who wished to improve their communication skills.

The 100-hour tutor training course comprised approximately 45 hours classroom instruction conducted on a one-day/fortnight basis over a three-month period, and 55 hours of face-to-face tutoring. Using criteria such as compatibility and logistical considerations, the enterprise-based teacher matched the tutors with co-workers who required assistance in literacy skills. Once the tutors and tutees had been matched, the teacher monitored the process, offered encouragement, support and when necessary, expertise.

Employees who were not matched with a tutor became the students of the enterprise-based teacher. Most common requests were for assistance with compiling resumes and writing reports and memos. Most of this work was on a one-to-one basis as release time difficulties made group work almost impossible to organise.

Research methodology

The case study took place the year after the program had officially terminated. In all, 17 people were interviewed individually. They were the program manager from the Tropical North Queensland Institute of TAFE who negotiated the course; the enterprise-based teacher who delivered the program; the Red Dome Human Resources Development Coordinator who was the key on-site person involved in the program; the General Manager; two departmental heads; four tutors, and seven students. Interview data were supplemented by written evaluations and reports already collected by the enterprise-based teacher.

Why did the program work?

Interviewee responses suggested that the program's success was attributable to at least four effective learning partnerships. These were the learning partnership between the company and the training provider; between management and the workforce; between the enterprise-

based teacher and the employees, and the learning partnership between the learners and their co-workers.

Learning partnership 1: TAFE program manager and mine management

At this workplace, the training program was subject to a successful application for funding from the Workplace English Language and Literacy (WELL) Program. This was prepared by the program manager from TAFE and the Human Resources Development Coordinator from Red Dome.

Collaboration between the provider and the company produced a proposal that was strongly responsive to the company needs. From the training provider's perspective, understanding the needs of the client is the single most important element in designing a program:

> *You have to become very familiar with the workplace. You have to get to understand what their strategic goals are, where that company is trying to go. Know about their philosophy on learning, their training and any systems they have in place for training. Understand their pay structures. In other words, become very familiar with how their operation works overall.*

The company, on the other hand, has to have a clear vision of its training philosophy and be able to articulate its training strategy. The Human Resources Development Coordinator stressed the importance of advance planning by the company to better integrate the training into the everyday work of the trainees:

> *We should have done our homework better to make the tasks more specific, to set up things in the workplace for people to do so they were actually becoming better at reading and writing as a part of the job not as an addition to the job.*

Learning partnership 2: Mine management and employees

The peer tutor relationships developed in a workplace where work practices and, in particular, management's promotion of training, pr duced an environment favourable to learning.

Notwithstanding the difficult working conditions, the morale of the workforce was high. Interviewees described a mutual respect between staff and management, which was summed up by a manager.

> *Here at Red Dome we have a culture, a way of thinking where we're all pretty well equal. I may be higher in terms of hierarchy, but after work, we're all the same. This basic equality and respect for fellow workers is reinforced with symbolic things like having the same standard of accommodation for all. There's no elitist bar. I think that permeates right through your working environment. There's a mutual feeling of trust and respect.*

In terms of training, Red Dome had two interrelated goals that made the development of its employees' training skills a company priority. First, it wanted to develop the in-house expertise necessary to provide as much of its own training as possible. Second, it planned to integrate as much of the training as practicable into existing work practices.

Communication training, therefore, was imperative in attaining the long-term goal of self-management of training needs. It gave employees the prerequisite reading and writing skills to undergo further training themselves, to pursue the necessary qualifications to become accredited trainers and assessors; and most importantly, the confidence and self-esteem that allowed them to realise that they were already learning and training in their everyday work.

Learning was actively encouraged with the recently introduced career path program called the Personal Development Plan. The previous skill acquisition scheme often referred to as the 'dash for cash' system was based on financially rewarding acquisition of skills to operate different pieces of equipment or machinery in the plant. This scheme had proved unsatisfactory because it resulted in unnecessary mobility while producing a workforce that was essentially at the same ASF (Australian Standards Framework) skill level.

The system had also become untenable in the face of new demands on the workplace—flatter management structures, developments in technology, the decline of labour intensive occupations, and the accelerating rate of change in the workplace. Most at risk were the process workers who could no longer assume that their jobs would continue to exist in their present form.

The life skills that formed the basis of the Personal Development Plan were based on the seven Mayer key competencies. The Plan consisted of eight broad bands or tiers in which each employee was located. A skill matrix provided a guide to identifying the skills that needed to be developed for each tier. Literacy and other communication skills featured strongly in the Personal Development Plan and as a result, employees had requested literacy and communication training.

The existing culture, with the new demands made by the Personal Development Plan ensured that the communications training program received management's support in terms of encouragement and time off for the tutor training.

Learning partnership 3: Enterprise-based teacher and employees

Upon completion of tenders and contracts, the enterprise-based teacher together with the company, assumed responsibility for the implementation and delivery of the program. The enterprise-based teacher entered learning partnerships at an organisational level with management and at a personal level with the trainees.

Integral to the program was the steering committee. It consisted of the Human Resources Development Coordinator, the enterprise-based teacher, and several program participants. The steering committee had a multi-faceted role that included: assisting with the course planning and its implementation; monitoring workplace needs; seeking feedback from the workplace; ensuring the needs of participants and non participants were represented, and finally, ongoing monitoring of the course. The enterprise-based teacher met regularly with the steering committee to share feedback about the program and to solve problems that were often of a logistical nature.

To service the communication training needs of her clients, the enterprise-based teacher needed to demonstrate a high level of flexibility in working arrangements. Following is how Dave, a coordinator, described his training experience:

> *Sue used to come in on the Monday plane and she used to come up and have a yarn to you. She'd ask when you could slot in a time to meet ... And before she left that week, she'd organise a time for the following fortnight. And if you couldn't make it, you'd talk about it when she first came in ... She'd work around us.*

From the enterprise-based teacher's perspective, important attributes that the trainer must bring to the various partnerships on site are high levels of workplace communication skills. The enterprise-based teacher has to relate effectively with a range of people from managers to operators, from people with very low literacy skills to tutors. Good negotiation skills in dealing with supervisors or managers to arrange student release time are also important. But the ability to establish good rapport with students is the most important requirement:

> *I can remember one guy coming in and the perspiration was pouring off him and he was shaking. And he said 'I'm not hot— just embarrassed'. ... You could have lost him at that stage if you didn't show a lot of patience and interest in him as a person.*

Although the program was a shared responsibility among all stakeholders, the enterprise-based teacher stressed the importance of the trainer developing a sense of ownership of the program:

> *If you don't go in there and push no-one else is going to do it for you. So the program is your responsibility in that sense.*

Learning partnership 4: Mine employees and their work colleagues

The fourth learning partnership operating in the program and the most direct in achieving the program's goals was the tutor-tutee partnership.

No two tutor-tutee pairs were the same. Each tutoring relationship was influenced by many variables including the goals of the tutee, situational conditions such as work obligations, the personalities of the tutor and tutee, their rapport and their commitment. Meeting times were either during working hours or after work. One tutor explained that his trainee had developed the confidence and enthusiasm to enrol in additional off-site courses in his time off and that their relationship had developed into a mentoring relationship.

Another tutor described his own learnings in fostering the learning of others:

> *I learned to move along at his pace not mine. In all the other instructing type jobs I've been involved in, I controlled the programs. With this it's different. It all depends on the person you're working with. You have to get to know him, get to know what he wants to achieve.*

In terms of longevity and possibly results, the enterprise-based teacher felt that the more effective pairs had tutors who adopted a more flexible and collaborative approach.

> *The ones that I saw as being more successful were the ones who saw the tutoring relationship as a partnership where they were working together. They were more open to the requests of the students.*

Outcomes

Over 30 per cent of the 120 employees were involved in the program as tutors or students. Six employees became accredited literacy tutors providing training to six fellow workers, and a further 25 students underwent training with the enterprise-based teacher. Both students and managers reported improvement in participant literacy skills, with managers also reporting an increase in company morale.

As well as immediate results the program contributed to the company's longer-term goal of building up its own training expertise. The trained adult literacy tutors became an on-site source of expertise in communication training, and co-workers continued to seek their assistance either formally or informally after the program officially terminated.

Unexpected consequences actually became as important or even more important than the intended outcomes. One example was maths-tutoring classes initiated by a metallurgist with the full support of his manager. These weekly classes attracted a dozen participants over a 12-month period.

The Human Resources Development Coordinator summarised the impact of the program as follows:

> *The value to me of the WELL program was not so much the WELL program itself but that it was a bit of a catalyst and it got people up and taking on a bit of learning—taking on something a little bit different.*

Conclusion

This case study illustrates that the success of a training program depends on the quality of the learning partnerships that exist in the workplace. The establishment of a peer tutor group trained in improving the literacy skills of co-workers was integral to this program. However, the tutor-tutee relationship was only one of several learning partnerships that was successful. In this case those relationships were between management and employees, between the provider and the company, between the trainer and the learners and of course, between the learners and their work mates. In describing mental monoliths such as 'contractual arrangements', 'company culture' and 'training programs' in terms of learning partnerships between people, I am emphasising that ultimately, success is dependent on relationships that value, actively promote, and facilitate learning.

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Acknowledgments

1. This research project was awarded funding under the ANTA Demonstrating Best Practice in VET National Project and was made possible by the generous cooperation of Red Dome Gold Mine, Niugini Mining Ltd. The project team comprised Jo Balatti, Lyn Camilleri, Lara Edgar and Catherine McRae.

2. The communication-training program was implemented through the utilisation of funding from the Workplace English Language and Literacy Program (WELL). WELL is funded by the Federal government and is administered by DEETYA.

CHAPTER 21
Building social capital and community learning networks in community Internet access centres

David Bruce

The Province of New Brunswick, Canada, has committed itself to the development of a highly Internet- and computer-literate society to take advantage of emerging employment and social opportunities. A key element in this strategy is the creation of community access centres in all rural communities and small towns in the province. These provide opportunities for residents to learn about, receive training on, and have continual access to, computers and the Internet. A natural by-product of this activity is the emergence of new networks among individuals and organisations at the community level, among communities, and between communities and the provincial bureaucracy. The close to 200 access centres are having varying degrees of success in developing new social capital and skills in their communities. A critical question is the future viability of these centres, which rely heavily on local volunteers, provincial employment programs, and blanket provincial policy and program intervention to ensure their sustainability.

Introduction

The establishment of community access centres in rural areas provides an opportunity for building social capital and developing new forms of community learning networks. This chapter explores answers to two critical questions: In what ways are community access centres building social capital? In what ways are community access centres serving as community learning networks?

Answers to both questions come through a discussion of how community access centres in New Brunswick, Canada, function. In particular, the discussion focuses on the lessons learned from the experience of their development and ongoing management.

The chapter begins with a brief overview of social capital and of community learning networks. It then turns to a discussion about changing government roles in communities, particularly the emergence of an enablement role for senior levels of governments within that context. A description of the enabling efforts of Connect NB Branché (CNBB) follows. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the substantive issues in the development and sustainability of community access centres within the context of social capital and community learning networks.

Social capital

Social capital is primarily built through an ongoing process of establishing norms and building trust. How communities learn, and how they approach the concept of what learning is about, determines the degree to which social capital is built and the extent to which communities respond and adapt to change. The contemporary knowledge-based economy depends on active and effective learning processes for developing this social capital.

What is critical in the context of rural Canada in general and rural New Brunswick in particular, is the need to use new forms of learning and to embrace information technology as vehicles for developing new local economies. This can only be achieved

through effective local provision and management of learning processes, the establishment of community trust, and the willingness to explore new inter- and intra-community networks. Rural New Brunswick's challenge is to change the traditional dependency model of both service delivery and income generation, to create new and vibrant communities.

Community learning networks

Community learning networks (CLNs) are defined as community-based structures designed to support learning for their members. These become increasingly important for those communities or groups that see themselves as being marginalised in the process of moving towards the 'new economy' (New Economy Development Group 1998; Law & Keltner 1996). Barriers of geography and time are diminished and access to knowledge and markets are improved. Technology is equalising opportunities for communities to compete.

Common among CLNs is their potential to rebuild and mobilise communities using computer and networking technology as the main tools. Perhaps the most important function of community learning networks is that of being a lifelong learning provider. Lifelong learning may be enhanced by using technology to build networks which support more collaborative approaches to learning, as well as changing the learner-educator relationship. This function addresses a structural gap in the provision of education generally. There are those (primarily adults) who are unable to avail themselves of existing formal learning opportunities. In a knowledge-based society, less work exists for those who are less qualified, and available work often yields lower pay. Providing alternative learning environments through community learning networks is one critical element of resolving that dilemma.

The importance of creating effective collaborative partnerships in establishing and operating CLNs is clear. There is considerable unanimity in terms of the positive impact of CLNs on community revitalisation, innovation, and a reduction in the sense of isolation and marginalisation. The usefulness of the technology as a tool for mobilising a broad cross-section of people, creating networks, and identifying under-utilised local resources is noted. Increased access to information and knowledge resources is cited as a benefit, with a range of technologies used (New Economy Development Group 1998).

Government as enabler

Canadian communities have traditionally looked to senior levels of government for some form of assistance in local development efforts, typically in the form of money. How can senior levels of government better help communities solve their own problems? The short answer is by providing resources and a framework within which communities can choose their own directions (Bruce 1997). Senior government is now becoming more interested in creating an environment in which to do business. This is characterised in part by the desire to establish public-private partnerships across all of its mandates. Senior levels of government need to provide the means and opportunity for communities to solve problems and develop solutions that best address their needs. Senior levels of government become 'enablers' of opportunities rather than 'providers' of programs and solutions.

With government as enabler, local communities are more likely to succeed in their efforts. The community makes strategic decisions about its future and pursues its goals, rather than endlessly chasing one government program after another. Priorities are set based on

community strengths and opportunities, rather than on those of others. Key decisions are made locally and action percolates from the bottom up, with the guidance and assistance of government staff. Projects and enterprises are initiated in the community, not transplanted from elsewhere. Government employees act as 'enablers' by providing information, training, and start-up capital when required. Initiatives aim at self-sufficiency, outliving the life of start-up grants. There is also growing awareness in communities that these initiatives should benefit a full range of residents, linking social policy with economic actions.

Enabling efforts of Connect NB Branché (CNBB)

A priority of the federal government has been to make Canada more competitive in the global information technology field. The Community Access Project (CAP) is a three-year, $15 million program to help 1500 rural and small communities connect to the Internet. CAP is a unique federal program providing start-up funds, training, and an electronic support network to communities. Its main objectives are to give Canada's rural communities economical access to the information highway and to train rural Canadians to use it for economic and community development purposes.

The province of New Brunswick has established itself as Canada's leader in information technology, and has contributed through financial, policy, and program vehicles to both the hard and soft infrastructure within the province. The province was the first to sign a formal cost-sharing agreement to speed up the number of New Brunswick communities to receive CAP funding (Information Highway Secretariat 1996).

CNBB, a special operating agency of the Information Highway Secretariat, coordinates the development and support of community access sites in New Brunswick. Its original mandate was to establish 200 sustainable community access sites in locations across New Brunswick by July 1998, and to provide the citizens of rural New Brunswick with lifelong learning opportunities utilising current information technologies in an accessible community environment.

Two years into the life of CNBB and almost three years into the life of the national CAP program, we are witnesses to some emerging successes and to some problem areas. Some measures of CNBB's 'reach' relating to the development of social capital and community learning networks, include:

- 185 *access centres* throughout rural New Brunswick (as of 31 May 1998).
- 85 per cent are *located in schools*, 7 per cent in community centres, and 4 per cent in each of libraries and other places within the community.
- 87 per cent of the local steering committees are *registered charities*, and 49 per cent have formal partnership arrangements with other community groups.
- A total of 1130 *volunteers* serve on steering committees while another 1006 volunteer in some other capacity (such as providing training or troubleshooting) with access centres.
- A total of 271 005 *people* have used a community access centre for one purpose or another (this figure is cumulative and includes the same individual each time they use the centre).
- There have been 3556 *courses* delivered to 20 670 participants.
- 62 people have received *payment for their employment* in various centres, above and beyond those employed through government employment programs.

- 826 people have received some *economic benefit* from their employment or training in community access centres (obtained a job in the marketplace or received a promotion in their current job).

These impressive numbers have been achieved primarily due to the enabling efforts of CNBB and its ability to leverage resources for all community access centres as a whole. Specific enabling elements include:

- Provision of *regional facilitators* to assist local communities with developing their funding applications and local partnerships, launching the access centre, and providing ongoing advice and contact.
- Development and provision of *standard manuals* to assist communities with basic implementation and management elements.
- Negotiation of changes to *school use policies* across the province. Traditionally the use of schools outside school hours for any activity was limited, and required a series of approvals from different branches within the education system. CNBB arranged for custodial services, dealt with security issues, and opened the doors of these 'community' buildings.
- Provision of *employees* for access centres. Through the provincial government's Rural Experience program, CNBB arranged for six-month work terms for people on social assistance to be employed as Internet facilitators in the access centres. It also coordinates summer student employment positions for all access centres and it has arranged for high school students interested in cooperative education to be employed in access centres. The removal of red tape and bureaucratic barriers for local committees to access these necessary resources has been critical.
- *Training* for staff and committees. CNBB provides weekly training for people employed in community access centres. It also holds periodic regional workshops for volunteers on steering committees, and an annual conference.
- Access to *adult education upgrading* programs. CNBB provides access to online learning software through a partnership with a private company.
- 'Get Connected II' *computer purchase and training* program. The Province of New Brunswick for two consecutive years offered a tax rebate program to encourage more people to either buy a home computer or upgrade their existing one. This has resulted in more computer owners and created a demand for computer training. In the program's second year, CNBB developed a training program aimed specifically at purchasers of new computers. Participants pay a $25 fee to the access centre for training and the province matches the fee, also paid to the access centre.
- Access to *dedicated government phone lines*. These phone lines cost only $21 per month. In many cases this reduces the monthly telephone line costs by 75 per cent or more.
- *Start-up money*. The cost sharing agreement between the federal and provincial governments provides communities with up to $30 000 to get their centre launched. The money has been spent on upgrading existing computers, new computers, special hardware such as printers, scanners or digital cameras, software, supplies such as paper and toner cartridges, and advertising.

Each of these have been critical enabling elements in making local community access centres viable start-ups, helping them to begin functioning as real community learning centres, and developing social capital in the community. The challenge now for the access centres is to find sustainability solutions, both in terms of revenue generation to meet

ongoing expenses, and in terms of building on the initial momentum and interest generated locally.

Implications for regional sustainability

There are several elements of 'contention' which contribute to varying degrees of success, mediocrity, or failure of community access centres, and thus have important implications for regional sustainability:

- Planting the seed—Big Brother or the community?
  Actively going into rural communities across New Brunswick and delivering the message that an opportunity for computer literacy and access will be lost if communities don't join the rush, smacks of 'Big Brother' in the eyes of some. Perhaps not every community sees the establishment of an access centre as the highest priority and would like to use the resources for other activities. Sustainability is linked to having decisions about community priorities made from within the community (Kretzmann & McKnight 1993).

- Appropriate venues of activity
  Part of CNBB's mandate is the use of the local schools as community access centres. For the most part this is laudable because of the existing infrastructure and hardware already in place there. But it is well known that for some segments of society the public school experience was a very poor one and it is proving difficult to bring those people back into the schools for access centre activities. Furthermore, because of the long history of local school buildings being inaccessible to the general public, there is still much work to do in promoting the use of the school as the access centre. A final point is that not all of the school principals, staff, or school district employees have been thrilled about the increased use of 'their' facilities and equipment. Sustainability requires appropriate venues defined and chosen by community.

Management and operations

The local community access centres are managed by volunteer steering committees. However, in some of the more rural communities there are only a handful of people with technology skills and they are relied upon heavily. To ensure sustainability the steering committees must work toward having a balance of representation among school employees, community people, technology people, and youth, and they must ensure some sort of rotation and turnover.

An important element of concern is the day-to-day operation of the centres. For the most part community access centres rely on government-paid employees to run the sites. Since it is unknown from year to year whether or not employment resources will be available to any or all sites, sustainability will require that sites develop a cadre of volunteers to supplement this resource.

Developing community

There is uneven 'development of community' across the province. In some communities, access centres have become an integral part of everyday life. In many other communities, however, there is a limited level of activity and integration with other community activities. Regardless of the degree of impact, access centres have played a valuable role in opening up a community resource (the public schools) which had previously been

unavailable to the general public. They have also created the opportunity for broadening the 'community of computer users' to include those who do not own a computer at home. In terms of economic development in communities the impact has been minimal, although in some communities local computer and software dealers, private Internet service providers, and web page designers have seen an increase in sales. Some businesses are beginning to use the Internet for economic purposes. Furthermore, the training at access centres is creating a more knowledgeable and computer literate society demanding new products and services in electronic format. This increases the chances for regional sustainability.

Building social capital

There is uneven development of new local partnerships in communities across the province. In some communities, particularly those with little or no previous Internet experience, many are joining the local steering committee, providing resources and support. However, in many communities local partnerships are frail and weak, or limited only to those between the local school and a handful of volunteers. The issue comes down to the 'value' placed on the access centre's activity and the extent to which partners see the potential benefit for themselves and the community.

It is fair to say, however, that we are witnessing a building of trust both within the community (in the form of new partnerships) and with the provincial government (through its various enablement efforts), resulting in new and emerging opportunities. The challenge has been for communities to take the risk and invest their time and energy in making access centres a real success locally (Dykeman 1990; Graham nd). Not all communities have taken this risk, posing a threat to regional sustainability.

Establishing viable community learning networks

CNBB has been successful in assisting communities with the provision of a broad range of training and development opportunities. The extent to which local community groups have actively marketed and promoted these opportunities varies greatly. Some have generated high volumes of demand while others have done very little marketing or perceive that there is little 'market' opportunity. What can be said is that only those access centres that make a commitment to active marketing and consumer development will succeed in establishing and nurturing a real community learning network.

Summary and conclusions: Sustainability solutions required

Sustainability is a critical challenge. Schuler (1996) argues strongly that access to a community network should be free, for the same reasons that society provides free public libraries, fire and police protection, and public schools. Most sites are struggling to find a balance between services that generate revenue—as they must do to cover basic expenses, repairs, and upgrades—and providing as much free access as possible.

A related sustainability issue is whether or not survival is possible without grants and subsidies. Cisler (1995, p. 6) notes that 'Many of the services provided on community systems are valuable to the community as a whole, but they may not make much money. [Community networks are needed because] commercial services seeking a healthy return on their investment may avoid marginally profitable services.' In some communities there will undoubtedly be small business start-ups—web designers, software developers, trainers—who will want a piece of the action generated by the access site. How will these sites survive in this climate?

CNBB has done a credible job of building community access centres in the province of New Brunswick through its enabling efforts. To ensure sustainability, communities must move beyond any notion of token contributions which result in access centres struggling from day to day, to making a serious contribution to ensure the success of the access centres, building social capital, and developing meaningful community learning networks.

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CHAPTER 22
Newspapers and health centres: Selected short stories of community development case studies

Rosa MacManamey, Ian Falk, David Bruce and others

This chapter is divided into three sections. Section One describes the Australian example of a newspaper's involvement in regional community development. Section Two describes the development of a community health centre. Section Three contains 23 selected snapshots of community development projects, large and small.

The purpose of the chapter is to provide an overview of the practical projects and strategies that people draw on to solve the challenges they face.

I would especially like to acknowledge the work of Lesley Harrison in the conduct of the Community Development Workshop from which were developed the short reports that appear in Section Three of this chapter.

Section One
A newspaper's contribution to community development: 'Believe it!'

Rosa MacManamey and Ian Falk

Introduction

The region in question is one of those with all the symptoms of rural atrophy. High unemployment, lack of availability of jobs, high youth suicide, big industry re-locating to cheaper labour sources, and a reduction in infrastructure in terms of government and private facilities and services. At the heart of the trouble it was believed that the population at large had lost hope. People's 'regional self-esteem' seemed to be at an all-time low. It seemed hard for people to believe that things could ever be better, yet in order to turn this tide, people needed to have hope—to believe in the possibility of positive outcomes in interventions in their futures. In these circumstances, the regional daily newspaper became interested in the economic condition of its distribution area. It had initiated several previous attempts to raise the region's awareness of the effects of its own apparent negative self-image; none seemed to result in long-term benefit. However, the leadership of the newspaper was determined that this time it would persevere, and it launched a new and invigorated campaign called 'Believe it!'

What was 'Believe it!' about?

There are other examples of cases where newspapers have taken a community development leadership role. The *Charlotte Observer* in the USA is one such. It aims for coverage that provides a background for solving community problems (Peirce & Johnson 1997). Others have used the support of a sole measure, such as sponsoring a sporting team, as a vehicle for raising the public's wider recognition of the value of community spirit. There seemed to be no documentation of the success or otherwise of these initiatives, and it seemed that such a campaign had the possibility to make a real difference. So following a cross-sectoral business breakfast hosted by the newspaper to launch the 'Believe it!' campaign, a partnership was forged between the newspaper and a local university research centre to conduct an 'action evaluation' of the campaign.

The action evaluation was designed to follow the various stories of different parts and groups of the newspaper's regional communities. The researchers formed an evaluative framework against which to gauge the campaign's impact, and the project was jointly funded by the newspaper and the university.

The newspaper had originally conceived of the campaign mainly on two fronts. One was to work closely with business to raise confidence and help create the climate for increasing job opportunities. The second was to sponsor and support the local football team and so help raise the community spirit—and, it was hoped, the self-esteem—of the general public. However, after some meetings with the researchers, which stressed the importance of a whole-community approach to community development, the scope was widened to include all aspects of the community—community and volunteer groups, local businesses of all kinds, celebrating the successes of employment outcomes. The newspaper ran daily columns featuring success stories under the 'Believe it!' banner. 'Believe it!' bumper stickers proliferated. The newspaper hosted a series of community conferences in key locations around the region to raise awareness of the campaign and to promote activities that saw the community working together.

What happened?

The researcher gathered all the stories from the newspapers, and followed up most of them with interviews as time went by. The purpose of the interviews was to tease out the possible impacts of the 'Believe it!' initiative, to see if its effects went further than expected (or not) and so created a snowballing effect. The researcher also followed up with a majority of the participants at a later stage to gauge longer-term impacts.

After nearly a year, the evaluation was completed. The outcomes showed that the campaign had been successful. For a start, it was recognised that the action evaluation could not hope to establish if there had been an increase in job availability, and no attempt was made to do this numerically. However, the documentation of a number of success stories shows how this community development measure has the capacity to work. The interesting things that did emerge from the evaluation, however, related to the increased capacity that communities gained in 'getting things done'.

Community projects that had been unresolved for years were accomplished following the whole-community meetings that brought the capacities of the towns and communities together for a common purpose. Many individual businesses documented the fact that, through their involvement in 'Believe it!' they had accelerated their business plan faster than in their wildest dreams. The public education sector became close partners, and immediately recognised the value in working across sectors to enhance outcomes for their students and schools, especially in the area of a closer integration of the schools with their local communities. Volunteer and fund-raising groups reported some astonishing outcomes from their involvement in the campaign.

Of course, there were not all success stories, but there were no failures, either. The action evaluation partnership's real value lies in the way it was able to show that *it is possible* to increase the community's confidence and level of activity, and it showed *how* this could occur in variety of ways for a variety of groups and people.

The lessons learned from the evaluation reinforce the accuracy of the principles of good practice in community development, and as a result of the project we are able to say that

the following features of good community leadership are of paramount importance in achieving a turnaround in a community's fortunes:

- building relationships across community sectors (genders, classes, ethnicities, ages and so on) to establish common interests and activities for furthering the community's specific future and goals;
- developing relationships from interactions which need qualities of historicity, externality, reciprocity, trust, shared norms/values;
- identifying relevant knowledge, common and identity resources for particular purposes taking account of need for plentiful interactions;
- bringing people together with resources to plan possible futures;
- from the futures agenda, planning opportunities, events, interactions small and large, across the community to facilitate the short- and long-term goals of the futures agenda;
- ensuring the facilitation of networking across groups and sectors throughout all processes, and
- celebrating and documenting successes, recognising and moving on from failures.

References

Peirce, N & Johnson, C 1997, *Boundary crossers: Community leadership for a global age*, The Academy of Leadership Press, Maryland, USA.

Section Two

Lessons learned from a business planning approach to community health centre development

David Bruce

(Note: Adapted from a paper presented by the author at the 30th Annual Community Development Society Conference, Kansas City, Missouri, USA, July 1998.)

Introduction

This section of the chapter describes the lessons learned from the Four Neighbourhoods Community Health Centre (FNCHC) in the community of Sherwood, Prince Edward Island (PEI), Canada, and their business planning approach to establishing their community health centre.

The community health centre (CHC) concept and community development

Community development is about helping people to develop the skills they need to make informed decisions and removing the structural barriers that prevent them from achieving their full potential as members of the community.

CHCs occupy a unique and privileged place in the health system. Their philosophy of community participation and their broad, holistic view of health allow them to consider health issues from a different perspective and to complement the activities of other more traditional components of the system.

The way CHCs are structured and funded makes it feasible for them to enter into effective partnerships with the communities they serve. They may not be the only organisations that can adopt community development approaches to deal with issues, but CHCs may be in a better position than any other elements of the health care system to work with communities on the determinants of health.

CHCs have proven to be 'health' effective as well as 'cost' effective for individuals and communities because they offer more preventative and health promotion services; are more accessible to disadvantaged groups; and have had more success integrating health with non-health services, resulting in lower costs per client, lower hospital utilisation rates, and lower drug costs per client.

Four Neighbourhoods Community Health Centre

FNCHC is located in the community of Sherwood, part of the Queens Health and Community Services Region. The catchment area encompasses a population of 9545 people (mostly youth and middle-income families).

FNCHC offers a variety of programs and services including:

- Community Kitchens/Community Kitchens for Seniors, which offer small groups of people a chance to meet and make low cost, healthy meals. They share the costs and then take several meals home with them.

- 'Mommy/Daddy I Don't Feel Well', family sessions to learn tips on what to do when young children are sick.
- Breastfeeding Support Group, a drop-in program for women (and their families) who are currently or are planning to breastfeed, providing information and assisting and supporting women who are currently breastfeeding.
- Parenting programs, including 'Nobody's Perfect' (for parents of children 0–5 years of age) and 'Ready or Not' (a drug education program for parents of children aged 12 and over).
- Drop in Child Play/Care-giver Support Group, providing a chance to learn tips on raising healthy children, an opportunity to get to know other caregivers in the neighbourhood, and to give preschoolers an opportunity to interact with other kids.
- Youth Panel, a group of students who talk to parents about what it is like to be in high school, the challenges youth face, and how parents can help.
- Youth Asset Map, where youth in the community created a map showing resources available to them as well as the skills they have to offer.

Business planning and community health centre development

A business planning approach makes sense as a community development tool. Reformed health systems generally do not provide new funds to support new or additional services; they must come from a more efficient realignment of existing services. Therefore, a business planning approach forced those involved to look carefully at what services already existed and who their potential clients might be. The CHC then positioned itself to accentuate or transfer existing services and programs to the CHC. In addition, various business-planning elements require broad-based input, thus satisfying the CHC's desire to actively involve the community in the development of the centre.

The elements of a business plan

A business planning process involves the following seven important elements:

1. *Clarification of Mission*—What business are we in?
2. *Competition Analysis*—Who else out there is in this business?
3. *Market Analysis*—Who will this business serve?
4. *Marketing Plan*—How will we promote our business to our clients?
5. *Operations Planning*—How will we provide products to our clients?
6. *Financial Management Plan*—How will we manage our resources?
7. *Organisation Structure*—How will we manage this business?

FNCHC chose to concentrate on the first three steps of the business planning process to define their 'product.' The remaining steps were carried out by a relatively small group of people serving on committees. In the end FNCHC produced a business plan that was accepted by the Queens Region Health and Social Services, and support for an 'operationalising' phase was negotiated.

The lessons learned

Resources are limited in any CHC. It becomes necessary to set priorities and to direct activities where they will be most effective. The lessons listed below reflect the experiences of those involved with the development of FNCHC, including past and

present staff, members of the present and interim Council, members of the Citizen's Advisory Committee, and staff of Queens Region Health Authority.

- Business planning is a useful approach for CHC development.
- Developing a CHC requires a committed group of people with a variety of skills.
- A clear vision is required.
- Health reform is a complex undertaking.
- Nothing develops in a vacuum.
- True partnering takes work.
- Official endorsement is important.
- Think carefully about committee structures.
- Clarify group decision-making rules up front.
- Try to maintain broad community involvement.
- Never make assumptions; always recheck with the community.
- Think ahead about staff/leadership requirements.
- Actively promote your CHC.
- Strive to find ways to increase participation.
- Give careful consideration to location.
- Keep moving forward.
- Community development is a continuous process.
- Look for opportunities.

FNCHC has implemented far more programs and is much more of a true 'community' health centre than the two CHCs developed through the provincial government pilot program. Both of those are located in hospitals, staffed primarily by Health Department employees, and are seen to be too closely tied to the health system as opposed to being a community initiative.

FNCHC has recognised that it is involved in a community development process. It takes time to work with neighbours to create opportunities, improve skills, and give the community greater control over its health. The business planning approach provided a useful and realistic community focus for this CHC.

Section Three
23 Snapshots of community development projects

Introduction
Section Three of this chapter summarises 23 snapshots of community development projects from around the world, but mainly from Australia. Each is produced in a similar format for ease of referencing, and includes the author's name.

SNAPSHOT 1
Monkton Headstart (Canada), David Bruce

Memorable features?
- community program aimed at single parent and low income families;
- break poverty cycles;
- life skills, food/clothing, bank, special programs;
- power play;
- focus on long-term vision/outcome, mutual benefit for broader community;
- diversity;
- business, community service clubs, individuals working together.

What made it work?
- personal commitment of one person, supported by others;
- corporate sponsorship of special events;
- broad volunteer base.

What limited its success?
- lack of government funding for operations;
- overwhelming social ills in communities.

SNAPSHOT 2
Year 5 Day (Queensland), Robyn Donovan

Memorable features?
- coordinated activities for Year 5 Primary Students provided at Department of Primary Industries (DPI);
- DPI 'scientists' provided activities which described their field of work;
- horticulture;
- animals;
- sharks;
- Landcare.

What made it work?
- personal invitation to extension officers;
- responding to their concerns;
- briefing session the day before (including morning tea)—with dummy run;

- the numbers of students increased from expected 400 to 840 so then more DPI staff were called in—the briefing was essential.

What limited its success?

- large groups of kids 50–100;
- my concern that the groups were too large.

SNAPSHOT 3
Dairy Discussion Groups 1975–1986 (Queensland), Dick Fells

Memorable features?

- groups of dairy farmers gathering together to talk about things of interest to them, from practical tips, to accounting, to helping with community activities like the local show;
- started to involve whole families;
- leadership skills developed;

What made it work?

- good facilitation (in hindsight);
- social needs;
- networking of resources through 'facilitators' (me);
- laid-back informal style;
- every farmer welcome;
- use of adult learning principles;
- letting go—control with group.

What limited its success?

- my lack of understanding of what I was actually doing;
- not using active learning process;
- inability to direct the letting go process—lack of understanding.

SNAPSHOT 4
CETCH—Continuing Education and Training Committee (Tasmania), Wren Fraser

Memorable features?

- to promote and support the provision of lifelong continuing education especially vocational education and training;
- brought together a far reaching group to work towards local post-secondary delivery having identified the specific needs of the Huon;
- overcame rural isolation and lack of access by opting for IT delivery and industry involvement;
- government funding for a skills centre;
- ANTA and ASTF Vet in schools project.

What made it work?

- strong community base;
- strong sense of place;
- an identified need;
- large pool of professional service providers;
- the 'will' to make it happen;
- a few visionary zealots to keep it on there.

What limited its success?

- power plays for the funding by participants;
- traditional locality rivalries;
- difficulty in grasping the delivery mode.

SNAPSHOT 5
Swan Hill Quad Care (Victoria), Mallee Family Care

Memorable features?

- no government aid so community was asked to assist;
- 80 volunteers engaged for rostered support;
- agencies (government and non government) 'clubbed' to create the infrastructure;
- my agency managed volunteer recruitment and training.

What made it work?

- community concern at absence of government assistance;
- cause had appeal;
- community could identify with problem;
- easy to publicise;
- volunteers could go home!

What limited its success?

- commercial interests attempted to exploit;
- need to separate good and 'not good' help;
- agencies keen to claim glory;
- need to avoid intrusion.

SNAPSHOT 6
Multi-level land use (Queensland), Jim Page

Memorable features?

- discussed with a graingrower who formed an association with a neighbouring grower;
- now expanded to four—all specialising in their areas of management interest, formalised in legal agreements;
- rules of participation are agreed to;
- diversity of management;
- skills recognised and encouraged;

- what they received determined by their contribution of assets and personal skills, labour etc.

What made it work?

- a shared goal of increased efficiency and profitability;
- leadership and people skills practised at leadership course;
- propinquity;
- diversity of skills and interest.

What limited its success?

- limited skills in financial and marketing area but good production skills;
- need for formal legal arrangements likely to limit ability to evolve;
- inexperience on part of all stakeholders including solicitor, accountant, insurance etc.

SNAPSHOT 7

'Spontaneous' extension (New South Wales), Jeremy Cook

Memorable features?

Due to long distances and remoteness, I would ask graziers who phoned me with a question to gather together a group of neighbours before I would travel out to answer their question in person rather than by phone.

What made it work?

- local issue;
- needs driven;
- voluntary participation;
- timely +/-;
- group rapport;
- trained the expert;
- informality;
- provision of expert advice;
- no formal objectives.

What limited its success?

- by invitation;
- diversity;
- downtime between calls;
- relied on graziers knowing the question/identifying the problem;
- informality;
- reliance on expert.

SNAPSHOT 8
'Turnaround' group (Queensland), Lindsay Coghill

Memorable features?

Formed about three years ago from a community meeting (200 attended) to address rural decline issues. Since then have done strategic planning, collaborated with a range of organisations to do market research and feasibility studies on a number of primary industries-based initiatives, and grown the individuals in the group. Attracted attention of government.

What made it work?

- State Department of Primary Industry (DPI) working with the group in a support and facilitation role;
- dedication of community members to work together;
- ability to collaborate with a range of organisations/groups to get things done;
- getting all personalities to commit to planning.

What limited its success?

- believing money to do things would solve all their problems;
- same group members, getting tired and wondering if getting anywhere;
- chasing smoke stacks rather than the people things;
- few young people involved;
- group members already very busy with own work/community issues.

SNAPSHOT 9
Housing expo (New South Wales), Greg Paine and Gerard Howard

Memorable features?

Aim:

1. To give people information on different housing services—mortgages, supported accommodation services, different housing types.
2. To 'raise awareness' of people in housing difficulty.

How to measure the success:

1. Good public attendance.
2. Change in local (government) policy.

What made it work?

- venue in middle of main shopping centre;
- video playing on footpath—showing/giving people the opportunity to say what they think;
- lots of information—all subjects by various stall holders;
- ten speakers and a 'celebrity debate' in evening.

What limited its success?

- design of venue space not ideal;
- hard to see an immediate outcome and judge success;
- people are busy and those comfortable with their lot did not see it as 'for them';
- variable participation by local decision-makers (councillors)

Swimming pool (Tasmania), Peter Cox, Mary Malliff, Anneke Tame and Colin Tame

Memorable features?

- Council agreement;
- small committee of seven;
- two years;
- cost $750 000;
- feasibility study $100 000;
- newspaper advert of meeting.

What made it work?

- vision;
- small committee;
- good management in committee;
- never give up x 3;
- fresh attitudes;
- new people in community.

What limited its success?

- this had been tried twice before;
- negativity from older people in community;
- councillors' apathy;
- project was too big.

SNAPSHOT 11
Community Transport Services (Tasmania), Bruce Milne

Memorable features?

A network of community agencies based in the north west and west coasts of Tasmania, dedicated to providing transport for the aged and those with disabilities. Association formed in 1989. Funding provided for vehicles and costs but local coordination and drivers were voluntary.

What made it work?

- community groups and their enthusiasm and cooperation;
- flexibility of service delivery;
- service tailored to meet specific community needs;
- funding and support for community agencies.

What limited its success?
- funding levels;
- narrow guidelines.

SNAPSHOT 12

Community facilities for isolated communities (Queensland), John Goodall

Memorable features?
Secured State funding for community facilities for two isolated communities. Each community had a population of around 100–150 people. They had no effective community centres.

What made it work?
- shire councillors took State government officers to the communities;
- the needs were clearly articulated by our office to the relevant State agencies;
- communication between stakeholders;
- tolerance of different lifestyles.

What limited its success?
- nothing—it was a success story, although the community spokespersons could benefit from training in communication skills.

SNAPSHOT 13

Launceston Business Incubator Centre (Tasmania)

Memorable features?
- involves heaps of different local people, groups and government departments;
- to be a 'birthplace' for 3–12 months for enterprising people who have a business;
- plan to set up business at a reasonable initial financial outlay;
- access to office, law, accounting and mentor support;
- success rate is estimated at 92 per cent.

What made it work?
- people talking;
- people listening;
- people resolving differences;
- working as a team;
- making sure progress ran in tune each step of the way;
- being positive!

What limited its success?

- there should be no limit to its success other than the management not continuing with the agreed initial principles;
- once the 'cord' or 'lifeline' is broken then it will wallow and fail.

SNAPSHOT 14

Working for Women's Health (Tasmania), Joan Coleman

Memorable features?

An accredited (TAFE) training program. Runs for one day per week over six weeks, recall day after six months. Program aims to mix non government organisations, community people and Comm & Health Services staff. Discuss/Learn—everything from the history of the women's movement through to group skills and use of media. Groups of two to three join together and work on a small project they have identified. At six months everyone reports back on project.

What made it work?

- cross fertilisation;
- support *plus* information given;
- participants choose their own topics, but work with like-minded others;
- support comes from facilitators and peers, plus links to new resources.

What limited its success?

- not everyone gets a project completed;
- some participants have been 'forced' into the course.

SNAPSHOT 15

Development of online training centre in small community (Tasmania), Susan Powell

Memorable features?

This has given us a united focus and brings together people who have been traditionally divided. Local talent has either been identified or is being developed.

What made it work?

- united focus/sense of purpose;
- something the community saw/sees as a valuable asset—high motivation;
- people willing to undertake tasks;
- powerful dominance—controlled early in the piece;
- school site—reasonably neutral site.

What limited its success?

- This is still happening—will need a wide variety of programs to ensure they are representative of the community interests.

SNAPSHOT 16

Futures Forum (New South Wales), Roderic Gill

Memorable features?

Participation by a variety of stakeholders, from the police to women's housing representatives, were able to communicate in a meaningful way and be heard and understood by diverse range of participants. Many diverse views incorporated into final plan.

What made it work?

- participation—participants chased and encouraged to attend which took lots of work;
- diverse views incorporated through everyone's ideas being put up on the board with discussion if contentious.

What limited its success?

- the menu of suggested activities had already been set which limit imagination of the group;
- not enough time, participants got worn out and tired;
- not full representation from community.

SNAPSHOT 17

Weaving the Threads (South Australia), Elizabeth Mansutti

Memorable features?

A performance by four Aboriginal families, 'telling' their story and including three grandmothers from the 'stolen generation'. Workshops, weekly over ten months recording (on paper) their autobiographies then selecting material for the script. Rehearsing, music workshops, training in stage performance. (An Aboriginal Director engaged also here.) Eight very successful performances, including one in the desert beyond Port Augusta.

What made it work?

- the determination of the grandmothers;
- the inclusion of their adult children and grandchildren;
- the power of 'visually' presenting their stories;
- the support of their extended families;
- their trust and patience with this 'white fella' writer;
- three small grants for the production, director and writer;
- other outcome/video and booklet for libraries and schools.

What limited its success?

- the time frame imposed by the grant bodies;
- lack of additional grants to travel the production;
- the poor health of one of the grandmothers.

SNAPSHOT 18

Alcohol management (Northern Territory) Julalakan-Tennant Creek Town Council and Tangetegeve Association Alice Springs

Memorable features?

- reducing dangerous levels of alcohol consumption by various means including closing all alcohol outlets on days people get cheques;
- Tennant Creek NT Alcohol Management Julalakan Association;
- Alice Springs NT Tangetegeve Association Housing and Employment;
- 17 housing areas and a broad range of support including garbage collection.

What made it work?

- negotiation with interest groups in the towns;
- commerce and local government;
- unity in town to negotiate with State government.

What limited its success?

- next level of government up fearing the creation of strong grass roots organisations outside their direct control.

SNAPSHOT 19

Rural and isolated young people (Tasmania), Helen Rees

Memorable features?

- two rounds of forums
  - nine statewide with young people identifying needs, aspirations, concerns, issues, recommendations - summarised in report - key issues identified
  - six statewide—young people and key stakeholders influence/influenced, e.g police, schools, local government, agencies (youth) etc.
- based on key issues—focus to identify strategies and responses;
- also collated and summarised in recently released report through Office of Youth Affairs (OYA);
- communities came together—some ideas able to be addressed immediately.

What made it work?

- young person participation;
- structure;
- communities meeting;

- dialogue;
- key issues, isolation, transport, education, employment, activities, communication, having a say (somewhere to go and something to do).

What limited its success?

- timelines;
- planning issues;
- changing participation;
- lack of follow up (in the context of community development—originally designed as a consultation process).

SNAPSHOT 20

Tourism for small town (Western Australia), Jane Moritz and Ian Crellin

Memorable features?

- group of citizens had developed community-managed facilities for local tourist industry and wished to expand into community facilities;
- 1994, President approached federal bureaucrats at a meeting in a town 200km away with a funding application which was inappropriate to the grant program selected. The President and the bureaucrats sat for several hours in local bar rewriting the application. Funding was received and Hyden now has a successful community Telecentre.

What made it work?

- willing and enthusiastic community leader;
- interaction;
- communication;
- willingness to engage the outside;
- good identification of community need;
- sense of community ownership of idea.

What limited its success?

- lack of knowledge initially by community;
- $/resources;
- initial misdirection to inappropriate funding source.

SNAPSHOT 21

'Remake' of a township (Queensland), Ivan Searston

Memorable features?

Ex mining town in decline; old (1880–1900) buildings; low self-value; little view of future. Local Authority conducted 'town workshops'; begins program to address resident needs as articulated by meetings (workshops); also begins effort at 'sprucing up' visual

appeal, repaint shire buildings in heritage colours etc.; theme picked up by residents—now remarked on by visitors as 'something special'.

What made it work?

- Shire leading from the front;
- residents listened to and needs actioned;
- encouragement not directive;
- next stage is development of new tourism based industry (networks in place to do so).

What limited its success?

- some individual business owners resistant to change and/or cannot see value in what is present with only little change.

SNAPSHOT 22

Reconnecting public schools with their community (Queensland), Mary Searston

Memorable features?

- Herberton: what can communities offer the teenagers?
- Malanda: what remains in the community to connect with the curriculum e.g. history: initiating a Medieval Banquet and Fair; a night with a Renaissance Dukedom;
- Ravenshoe: employer-based seminars to teach matriculating youth about the workplace, local and wider community.

What made it work?

- involvement of wider community with which all schools had lost much contact except in money raising capacity (also limited funding);
- making opportunities for students, teachers and others to value opportunities for learning existing in these communities, not 'outside'.

What limited its success?

- limited understanding of long-term community goals and benefits;
- tendency to look at system's constraints as more powerful than the betterment of the community by the education 'system';
- poor self-esteem.

SNAPSHOT 23

Skills.net Roadshow, taking technology to the 'Bush' (Victoria), Sandie Downey

Memorable features?

- participation is widespread;
- diversity is all encompassing;

- equity is not an issue;
- power plays have been met with challenge, from within each community.

What made it work?

- being accessible to all, no matter what the location or time;
- the people within each community.

What limited its success?

- nothing!
- it works and is growing stronger every day.

CHAPTER 23
Enabling leadership: A new community leadership model*

Ian Falk and Bill Mulford

Over the last few decades, a number of communities in regional areas have been successful in their efforts to halt the slide in their communities' fortunes (Editor 1997; Falk & Harrison 1998). Consolidating and even developing a community under adverse economic circumstances is not easy, and is often viewed as pointless—the last ditch effort by desperate survivors. The common threads to success stories lie in the way the community leads the development of its stores of social capital. This chapter discusses these two aspects of rural development—the question of leadership and the need to marshal new forms of leadership around the development of social capital to bring sectors together in times of change as communities of learners working for the greater common good.

Change and leadership

Some argue that the decades of change, improvement and reform have left many, consciously or otherwise, confused, exhausted and disillusioned (Deal 1995). On the other hand, Drucker (1989, p. 10) reminds us that 'a time for turbulence is also one of great opportunity for those who can understand, accept, and exploit the new realities. It is above all a time of opportunity for leadership'. In fact, it could be argued that understanding the role and function of leadership is one of the most important intellectual and practical tasks of this generation (Fairholm 1998). The reason is simple. Those in our communities who take on leadership roles or functions play a major role in helping us shape our lives. Success in the new millennium, as in the past, will depend on how well leaders understand such things as their roles and functions, the leadership processes in which they are engaged and their own and their community's values and visions.

Our research (e.g. Falk & Kilpatrick 2000) shows that there are two sets of resources that leaders of the 21st century must take account of, as they interact with each other, in developing the social capital of modern communities: *knowledge* and *identity* resources. The knowledge is about people and common resources that facilitate action through people's interactions. Identity is about using relevant available resources to foster people's identity in ways that promote self-confidence and a willingness to take a risk and act for the common good of their communities; in other words, to take on leadership.

The definition of social capital used here, developed from Falk and Kilpatrick (2000) is:

> Social capital is the product of social interactions that may contribute to the social, civic or economic wellbeing of a community-of-common-purpose. The interactions draw on knowledge and identity resources and simultaneously use and build stores of social capital. The nature of the social capital depends on various qualitative and quantitative dimensions of the interactions in which it is produced, such as the quality of the internal-external interactions, the historicity, the reciprocity, the trust and the shared values and norms (p. 103).

This definition stresses the role of interpersonal interaction as the engine of social capital. Any interaction between two people will involve the participants bringing into the

conversation or discussion things they know and indicators of their identity. These two groups of resources—knowledge and identity resources—are closely related and interact with each other. For example, people might believe they are not leadership material. In some cases, this might be a statement resulting from a long history of 'knowledge' of their experiences, times when they have tried but not succeeded in leading others according to their own and others' criteria of success. However, the belief about not being leadership material might also represent a statement about peoples' identities, in the sense that they are simply not willing to 'have a go' at leading. Their confidence may be low when working in groups, or they may be shy. They may not have the knowledge to be able to articulate their reasons. This is not a piece of knowledge that people have: it is an aspect of their self-perception, or identity. They are bringing up in the conversation, their identity as 'non-leader', so reproducing their public role as non-leader with the other.

Let us take the above example one step further. If people with the 'non-leader' identity undergo, for example, a further education course on self-confidence and leadership skills, they may well then have additional knowledge which affects the resources they have to draw on in the presentation of their own identities. Alternatively, they may experience a crisis of some kind, and 'without thinking' take a leadership role. By so doing, they 'learn' something about themselves, which allows their self-perception to alter and so affects their identity formation and presentation.

What this definition and examples of social capital show is that leadership is normally distributed, dispersed and diffused rather than concentrated in one or few hands. Not only are leaders heavily dependent on followers, but also, followers can become leaders. Knowledge and identity resources can assist a person make this transition. For example, the following are some of the key qualities of interactive process that foster positive learning of knowledge and about identities, and so contribute to enhanced networks, relationships, collective action and, therefore, leadership:

1. *Building internal networks:* Are the relevant knowledge of skills, knowledge and values present for the purpose in hand?

2. *Building links between internal and external networks:* How well are the links between the internal and external networks in the community built and maintained?

3. *Building historicity:* How effective is the building of shared experiences (including norms, values and attitudes) and understandings of personal, family, community and broader social history?

4. *Building shared visions:* How systematic, inclusive, and inclusive of knowledge and identity resources (including norms, values and attitudes) is the reconciliation of past shared experiences with the desired future scenario/s?

5. *Building shared communication:* How explicit and systematic are the communicative practices, about physical sites, rules and procedures?

6. *Building each other's self-confidence and identity shifts:* How explicit and systematic are the opportunities where these interactions occur?

The role of leaders under these circumstances can be seen to be developing trust. For example, the building of networks relies for its success on building trust between the

network members which is a clear leadership role. Likewise, building trust between people as they share communication is fundamental to successful outcomes. It can also be seen that one outcome of the above indicators of sound process will be enhanced levels of generalised trust and commitment in all the networks of that community-of-common-purpose. In other words, trust is apparent at both specific and generalised levels, and building trust is clearly a goal of leaders of the new millennium.

It is useful to reflect on the way conceptions of leadership have changed over the years, in response to changing circumstances. The next section provides a snapshot of the history of leadership as a springboard for discussing why contemporary leadership is different, and how it might be characterised. We will argue that none of the previous models seems to 'fit' the circumstances required of leadership in communities of the new millennium. We will propose a fifth form of leadership that we do consider 'fits' the new circumstances, a model we call 'enabling leadership'.

Four types of traditional leadership

The four established forms of leadership can be termed: *managerial*, *participative*, *contingent* and *learning*.

Managerial

The first category was the managerial. It highlighted the functions, tasks or behaviours of the leader and assumed that if these functions were carried out competently, and members behaved rationally, the organisation would prosper. It was about control, precision and predicability (Fairholm 1998). Followers' involvement was seen as 'transactional' with compliance exchanged for valued things whether they be economic, political, and/or psychological (Leithwood & Duke 1999).

In one form, managerial leadership was about hierarchies with power, authority, and expertise commensurate with position (Leithwood & Duke 1999). Pyramid theory, as it was termed by Sergiovanni (1996), was seen to work well in situations that involved standardised products which were achieved in uniform ways and that did not require those involved, to be mutually pursuing higher purposes. However, if applied to the wrong situation, the result of managerial leadership could, at best, be chaotic or, at worst, a bureaucratic nightmare (Sergiovanni 1996).

In another form, managerial leadership was about standardising work processes. In schools, for example, this meant making the curriculum 'teacher-proof' by providing as much detail as possible with clearly articulated procedures of teaching and a ways to monitor progress. This railroad theory (Sergiovanni 1996), was thought capable of ensuring that followers were collectively both on track and on time. However, it was also thought to be prone to goal displacement in the form of 'doing things right', that is following rules and procedures, rather than 'doing the right things', that is solving problems and making good decisions. It has been suggested that when the goals are clear-cut, and when choices can be made on the basis of known and objective technical criteria, the engineer rather than the leader is called for (Sergiovanni 1996).

Senge et al. (1999, p. 565) have argued that, 'It would take a genuine flight of fantasy to both take seriously the multiple interdependent challenges involved in sustaining profound change and still hold the view that change happens because great men *[sic]* 'drive' change from the top'. He continues, 'Organizations will enter a new domain of leadership when we

stop thinking about preparing a few people for 'the top' and start nurturing the potential for leaders at all levels to participate in shaping new realities' (p. 568).

Participative

The second leadership category was the participative. It de-emphasised visible top-down hierarchies and detailed scripts that programmed what followers must do. It stressed the decision-making processes of the group.

Like the managerial focus, participative leadership has taken different forms. One form was not that far removed from the managerial in that it involved getting others to do what the leader wanted but in a 'nice' way using positive human relations. It usually involved outsiders and/or the leader providing a vision, or high performance goals (Sergiovanni 1996) and then followers, as a result of their expertise, interest, role in implementation, and/or democratic right (Leithwood & Duke 1999), collectively deciding how to achieve them. The leader's job was to set the compass direction rather than provide mandatory road maps (Sergiovanni 1996).

Often in participative leadership, the leader's role in implementation was seen as one of motivating their followers to share and work effectively towards the leader's vision and values (Bolman & Deal 1991; Fairholm 1998). In contrast to a transactional emphasis in managerial leadership, 'transformational' leadership focused on the commitments and capacities of followers. Higher commitment to goals and greater capacities for accomplishing those goals were assumed to result in extra effort and greater productivity (Leithwood & Duke 1999).

This model assumed that once followers were empowered to make decisions about how they would do assigned work, they would do it, do it well on a continuing basis and, at the same time, be motivated, committed and satisfied. However, another form of participative leadership emphasised facilitation and the use of all available human resources. The task of the leader was not necessarily to get what he or she wanted but to empower or facilitate others to do what *they* wanted. True empowerment and a full sense of responsibility were assumed to require having autonomy over means *and* ends, that is over purposes, goals, priorities and other issues of policy. Separating the planning from the doing may be okay when all expertise resides with leaders or when applied to the running of some organisations, such as fast-food restaurants. However, it may not be okay at other times, such as the present, where there is increasing uncertainty and complexity and where the education and expertise levels of people has continued to increase (Sergiovanni 1996).

Contingent

This last point brings us to the third leadership category, contingent. Here the focus was on how leaders responded to the unique circumstances or problems they faced. Here leadership was seen as always situational and relational (Bolman & Deal 1991) and able to be changed to suit the changing context.

Several writers have offered situational (not to be confused with 'situated') theories of leadership. For example, Hersey and Blanchard (1982) argued that depending on the maturity of the followers (defined as their ability and readiness to do a good job), the leaders needed to combine their task and relationship behaviour in different ways. For the situation where followers were unable and unwilling to do a good job, the appropriate leadership was 'telling' (high task, low relationship); followers unable but willing required

'selling' (high task and high relationship); followers able but unwilling needed 'participation' (low task, high relationship); and followers able and willing needed to be left alone, or 'delegated to' (low task, low relationship).

While attractive, contingent leadership theory was seen to have its problems. For example, leadership involved relationships beyond immediate subordinates, including significant stakeholders, peers, superiors, and external constituents. Such leadership also needed to consider the development of followers. A leader who persisted in 'telling' those who were unable and unwilling to do a good job merely ensured his or her followers remained 'immature'. Finally, it has been argued that there are situational factors other than followers' maturity that are important to consider (such as whether the situation is in a production line or a rural community) and that no advice is offered on who or how judgements are made about maturity (one assumes it is the leader who may or may not have the expertise) (Bolman & Deal 1991).

Learning

A fourth, final, more recent and not fully articulated leadership category centres around the leader's fundamental or core values. This category could be summarised as learning. It arises from a re-analysis of the dramatic change we all face, including, as Howard Gardner (1995) argued, the possibilities of immediate or gradual world destruction, new forms of instant, copious and often overly simplified forms of communication, the demise of privacy, the proliferation of entities that transcend national boundaries, heightened fundamentalism, and the increased politisation of public enterprises. It includes elements of professional leadership or leadership based on expertise (Sergiovanni 1994), moral leadership (Leithwood and Duke 1999), values-based leadership (O'Toole 1995), and spiritual (whole-soul) leadership (Deal 1995; Fairholm 1998).

The last element arises from a belief that leadership comes out of the leader's inner core spirit. This, not facts about personality or situation, determines what is right and good for them (Fairholm 1998). For example, Gardner's (1995) analysis of what he called 'leading minds', namely leaders such as Martin Luther King, Margaret Thatcher and Mahatma Gandhi, led him to construe leadership as a transaction that occurred within and between the minds of leaders and followers. In this sense, a leader is an individual who creates a story that significantly affects the thoughts, behaviour and feelings of a significant number of people. Gardner (1995) found that the most powerful stories were ones about identity; stories that helped individuals discover who they are, where they come from, where they are, or should be, headed. A crucial element in the effectiveness of a story hinged on whether the leader 'embodied' the story. Senge (1990) goes further in declaring that the leader bears an almost sacred duty to create conditions that enable people to grow and have productive and happy lives. The conditions change people (including the leader him or herself), allow them to learn, to be different, better, than before. The change involves a change from the extrinsic (what gets rewarded gets done) to the intrinsic (what is rewarding gets done and, most importantly, what is good gets done).

Conditions for a situated Enabling Leadership model

Until now, the four models outlined have focused on 'the leader' rather than on the situation that leaders must enable. The speed and nature of change as we approach the new millennium have re-focused our attention on the situations that demand a leadership of enablement, rather than on the 'person' themselves. This re-focusing provides an important

and new possible perspective for those concerned with leading in new times—a chance to include and value a wider group of people than where the focus is on the one 'leader'.

John Gardner, in his introduction to an important summary of issues and challenges facing community leadership for the 21st century (Peirce & Johnson 1997) highlights some of the main requirements for leadership under the new circumstances:

> What we need, and what seems to be emerging in some of our communities, is something new—networks of responsibility drawn from all segments, coming together to create a wholeness that incorporates diversity. The participants are at home with change and exhibit a measure of shared values, a sense of mutual obligation and trust. Above all, they have a sense of responsibility for the future of the whole city and region (p. vi).

Peirce & Johnson (1997) describe ten 'lessons' that we are using provisionally as the basis for the model of situated Enabling Leadership.

Lesson 1: The table gets larger and rounder
The old-style top-down management style doesn't work much any more. We are in a transition to a new, more collaborative style, a culture where citizens insist on having a place at the table. We must find ways to include everyone.

Lesson 2: The only thing more challenging than a crisis may be its absence
Success in cities is often heralded as a story of civic perseverance in the face of extreme crisis, but complacency has led to serious unattended problems. The lessons prove that even in the absence of civic meltdown, smart cities can solve problems before they loom large.

Lesson 3: The agenda gets tougher
Shiny new buildings and newly-bustling cities are the easy part of development. The more difficult question is how to improve the lives of those still caught in dead-end suburbs and towns of poverty and hopelessness. Progress is possible. People are talking about the problems and possible answers. That is not necessarily a solution, but it is seen a powerful first step.

Lesson 4: There is no magical leadership structure—just people and relationships
The message from a wide variety of cities in the United States is that there is no all-purpose governance structure that works today. What matters instead is organising governance based on a community's strengths—and recognising that it is the relationships among people that get things done. In every case of successful leadership, it is not the structure that matters, but the way people work together to get things done.

Lesson 5: No one's excused
Everyone has to chip in to make the mix work. Universities, professions, faith communities, and the media are top among the candidates to enrich the leadership mix.

Lesson 6: Sometimes the old ways still work
Charismatic individual leaders can still make things happen. The lesson is to respect and welcome civic-minded leaders who can make a difference.

Lesson 7: Collaboration is messy, frustrating and indispensable
Regardless of whether traditional leaders like it, collaboration is here to stay. Once people

know they can have a voice, they demand it. The partnerships take many forms. But power-sharing is always difficult, and some learn the language so they can abuse the process. Today, development groups are fumbling toward collaboration, making mistakes, and beginning to form new, inclusive institutions that can solve problems.

Lesson 8: Government always needs reforming, but all the reforms need government
Most people in Western countries say they don't like their governments, but real change depends on good government. Government's perceived role runs the gamut across the country, from innovator and catalyst in to leader. These days, government has a new role—as a bridge between community organisations and business. In all its myriad forms, though, and despite its inefficiencies and problems, we still need government as a partner for real, long-term change.

Lesson 9: Place matters
Connect to the Internet all you want—but realise that home counts. The places that matter most today are (a) regions, formed by districts, suburbs and inner cities; (b) neighbourhoods, increasingly organised and involved in partnerships; and (c) city centres, the heart and soul of every region.

Lesson 10: Keep your eye on the ball
No success is ever final. After major community events such as carnivals or fairs, regions and cities cannot afford to be complacent. The community must be kept 'toned up' to respond to opportunities and keep the community capacity bubbling along.

A situated Enabling Leadership model

The precondition for 'good leadership' in the new times heralded by the above is that the leadership is not approached from a predetermined 'this is the right way to do the job' stance: the action is situated in a particular location, with particular needs and particular planned outcomes in the form of *enabling* others. The situation dictates the needs, the planning and the outcomes. The situation determines the type and extent of enabling leadership that is involved. Think of a typical community activity—a club or association, the local School Parents and Friends committee or other group activity. The participants interact with each other, talk through local issues and problems, discuss local and national events, scandals, births and people, consider what forms of leadership will achieve the social and economic outcomes which are the common goals of the project. How do these forms of leadership match different stages of the activity? What kinds of characteristics of people and resources are required at different times? The answer, of course, is that these characteristics are indeed determined by the nature of the changing situation and how to enable its goals, not by some preconceived notion of 'a good leader'. The characteristics include these attributes of an enabling leader in new times:

- relationship-building across community sectors (genders, classes, ethnicities, ages and so on) to establish common interests and activities for furthering the community's specific future and goals;
- relationships developing from interactions which need qualities of historicity, externality, reciprocity, trust, shared norms/values;
- identifying relevant knowledge and identity resources for particular purposes taking account of need for plentiful interactions;
- bringing people together with resources to plan possible futures;

- planning opportunities for future events, interactions small, large, across community to facilitate the short- and long-term goals of the futures agenda;
- ensuring the facilitation of networking across groups and sectors throughout all processes, and
- celebrating and documenting successes, recognising and moving on from failures.

...and in conclusion

Situated Enabling Leadership as relationship building across traditional barriers, may at first, appear to be an unnatural act. It needs to be learned. It requires constant, hard work. Tools for community builders include relationship building and collaborative problem-solving. More than this, they involve carrying out situational analyses, an extension of the now trendy Community Resource Mapping, to establish the knowledge, identity and interactional needs of the particular purpose in hand. With the results of the situational analysis, the leadership structure for that situation can be specified and, as happens with all successful community projects, relevant, local solutions can be woven from the diverse and complementary threads of the overall community fabric.

If there is one lasting lesson from our review of the literature on leadership, it is that there is no external answer that will substitute for the complex work of changing one's *own* situation (Mulford et al. in press). In stopping the exploration for the 'silver bullet', leaders will have started to break the chains of dependency. Realising that there is no answer can be quite liberating (Hargreaves & Fullan 1998). Leaders need to be learners. They need to craft their *own* theories of change, constantly testing them against the new situations (Hargreaves & Fullan 1998). The key here is getting a balance between continuity and constant change. Peters (1987) was right when he said that the core paradox in a world of massive change 'is fostering (creating) internal stability in order to encourage the pursuit of constant change (p. 395).' Stability for change, moving ahead without losing our roots, becomes the challenge.

It is not likely that much progress will be made over time in improving communities unless we accept the reality that those involved in leadership for the community should learn from the above lessons, especially the leadership categories related to contingency and learning (Mulford 1998). It needs to be different and needs to begin to invent its own practice. Communities need to develop their own theories and practices that emerge from and are central to what communities are like or want to be like, what communities are trying to enable, and what kinds of people communities serve (Bishop & Mulford in press; Sergiovanni 1996).

The actual future rural regional Australia will inherit is partly of its own making. Those able to act, those able to put the heart and soul back into their communities, will have developed cooperative and enabling processes in their community. Power is distributed along with the leadership, not vested in one authority figure. Previously, the underlying question has been, community for who? In the new situation, the basic question is community for what? The answer to this question provides the 'roots', the stability, from which to judge which change to embrace.

We cannot avoid change: indeed we may wish to seek, embrace and even thrive on it. Rural regional Australia must anticipate change as being one of the constants they will face. Whether these changes result in Frankensteins, or gentle, functional, collaborative and sustainable butterflies, depends, to a substantial extent, on the response of those in the

communities. Communities can continue to be on the receiving end, to be dependent, or they can *choose* to make a stand, together, to be empowered. The response can do no better than to remember the wise words written by a Chinese scholar in 604 BC:

> As for the best leaders,
> people do not notice their existence.
> The next best,
> the people honour and praise.
> The next,
> the people fear.
> The next,
> the people hate.
> When the best leader's work is done,
> the people say,
> 'we did it ourselves'.

* *We attribute our use of the term 'enabling' to Mr Tony Smith, a researcher with the Centre for Research and Learning in Regional Australia, and thank him. Tony suggested that the word 'enabling' was the appropriate one for managing the contingencies of the situated nature of contemporary leadership.*

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PART FOUR

Conclusion

CHAPTER 24
Learning to manage change in communities: A way forward

Onko Kingma and Ian Falk

This chapter synthesises the views in the previous chapters. It discusses what this synthesised view means for future policy and practice in regional development and community capacity building.

Introduction

The point of departure for this book is the urgent need to develop a way forward for rural Australia. Many communities are demoralised, their backbone of volunteers worn out. However, the political message is that these same communities are ready and willing to engage in a rural renaissance. Despite this willingness, clarity on what should be done and how to do it is often lacking. There is even a view that rural adjustment has inevitable outcomes in terms of the demise of rural Australia as we know it, and that there is nothing that can or should be done about it. Guidance is required on both conceptual approaches and practical action which communities can take.

Significantly, the Minister for Education, Training and Youth Affairs, Dr Kemp, stated the following in a media release (2000):

> This is a time when smaller communities are looking to their future and how to prosper in a highly competitive environment. They are also keen to keep their home-grown talent which is vital to preserving and building the social fabric of rural and regional communities in the 21st century (p. 1).

These words add to the (now) many government portfolios proclaiming the worth of communities and their wellbeing in rural and regional areas, and words such as these indicate a willingness to put some of the rhetoric into practice. The caution is to establish whether these words represent an old policy wrapped in new rhetoric, or whether they in fact represent a shift to a more inclusive and integrated way of approaching rural issues.

It is clear businesses and communities must have the capacity and confidence to master change and for this, economic resilience, empowerment and a learning environment are important. Socioeconomic wellbeing in communities is also dependent on development of regional infrastructure—education, training, transport, energy, public amenities, communications, health—all areas now requiring combined public and private partnerships for investment. While in many cases this may be necessary in economic terms, in others a greater mobilisation of the community and activities which allow communities to help themselves provide alternative approaches.

There is a need to shift from the old rhetoric of decline and limited opportunities in rural communities to strategies for creating communities which can determine their own destinies and grow. A number of communities have already taken this path and much can be learned from their success. This is essentially the purpose of this book—to present a 'different' analysis of the rural scene and practical models and initiatives adopted by some successful communities. Vital lessons can be drawn from such a task. The aim here is to share the

views of experts and practitioners on both conceptual and practical approaches to community development. This chapter provides a synthesis of these views.

The need for new approaches

One thing is quite clear, namely that 'old policy' wrapped in new rhetoric is no answer to the problems facing rural and regional Australia in the 21st century.

Most rural communities lack the social, civic and economic capacity to manage the massive change driven by a range of factors most of which are, but need not necessarily be, outside the control of rural people. Falk (Chapter 1) has provided an analysis of these factors. Technological change and expansion of knowledge tend to work in favour of scale and overcoming of the tyranny of distance. The result is globalisation of our economies, information systems, financial institutions, and business and leisure activities. This trend is reinforced by other factors such as, economic rationalism, metro-centrism and the urban drift, trends in schooling, revision of the nation's literacy and numeracy requirements, the policy environment of the three tiers of government, the nature of work in the regions, unemployment, an ageing population and shifting meanings of key concepts. While bringing many benefits, at the local level, the resulting economic and social structures from these changes often act to disempower or marginalise communities.

Several authors such as Courvisanos (Chapter 2), Bawden (Chapter 3) and Bradbery et al.. (Chapter 12), point out that in these circumstances, inequality often grows and the environment within which people live and work alienates them and debases those values necessary for a sustainable and balanced society. The statistics presented by Falk (Chapter 1) and Courvisanos (Chapter 2) tell the story—escalation of crime, suicide and social dislocation. Bawden (Chapter 3), through use of systems analysis, describes the devastating downward spiral that results from such imbalance. As argued by Bawden (Chapter 3), Geno (Chapter 4) and Perkins (Chapter 5), democracy cannot thrive under these circumstances.

Unfortunately, rhetoric and policy tend to support the forces at play. Simplistic appeal to markets as the mechanism for generating socially optimal outcomes for society is inadequate. Blind faith in competition policy and microeconomic reform as the way forward will work to reinforce imbalance. Clearly, there is a case for review—but realistic review which, while acknowledging the realities of our global economy, starts from values and principles of dynamic communities and then works towards inclusive, community solutions. This is the argument in the chapters by Bawden (Chapter 3), Geno (Chapter 4), Perkins (Chapter 5) and Bradbery et al. (Chapter 12). But this is different from the usual rational economics solution where the policy *means* is the market and the *ends* are the market outcomes.

The market allegedly expresses peoples' preferences, hence outcomes from this process are allegedly what people want. These authors analyse the flaws in this argument—not only the inevitable imperfect operation of many markets, but also the inability to establish markets for some activities and the problems of aggregating market outcomes to socially optimal outcomes for society. These authors also point to the inherent biases which creep into market economies where those with power and property rights can reinforce inequities and disenfranchisement of those without property rights, and where alienating technologies and institutions invoked by market solutions become ever more domineering and exclusive.

Courvisanos (Chapter 2) in economics and Bawden (Chapter 3) in systems theory, both in path breaking work, have addressed some of these issues based on evolutionary, innovation

systems. Their approach involves re-conceptualising our economic system as a dynamic, organic structure where processes of innovation, learning, institution building and diffusion of technologies and knowledge, act to create regenerative societies. Such societies can reverse the inevitable outflow of economic and social infrastructure that follows change within our current economic systems. They work to build social capital.

Within such revised conceptualisations of our socioeconomic system, a 'different' policy framework emerges. Here, we first want to know the *ends* or outcomes we want and only then should we turn attention to the *means* or best ways to achieve these ends. There are major new policy issues here. The preferred means may ultimately still be the market but under this new approach, new institutional settings could well generate totally different (market) outcomes.

Bawden (Chapter 3) argues the challenge to convention reflects two fundamental tenets: (a) that the essential activity of being human is not the setting and seeking of goals of resource allocation, but the establishment and maintenance of relationships; and (b) that learning about our world involves experience, spiritual insights, values, emotion and disposition, as well as 'pure' reason. Relationship building, it is argued, is the essence of social capital, while learning is its currency. Evidence is provided in support of the contention that we are moving 'beyond economics' as an expression of total human endeavour, and this is related to the notions of a risk society and what is referred to as reflexive modernity. The challenges of the globalisation of risk and thus the risks of globalisation are explored from a perspective of 'appreciative systems', and this notion is itself investigated through the perspective of learning systems.

By addressing *values first*, authors such as Geno (Chapter 4), Perkins (Chapter 5) and Bradbery et al. (Chapter 12) are able to articulate what is required in rural areas and, indeed, in Australia generally. They argue for re-establishment of a sustainable community in which people are empowered and participate , in which there is vision, learning, broadly based (but not necessarily business) leadership and where there is congruence between market outcomes and what people want. Solutions lie in bringing about a framework in which creativity and learning can be expressed. This in turn, relies on the rebuilding of trust, inclusiveness and reciprocal, purposeful collective action through internal and external networks. All of these are central features of social capital and learning communities, and all are necessary for effective market transactions and successful community based ventures. Such a transformation relies upon changing the institutions within which people live and work. Change institutions and you change behaviour and hence market solutions.

These points are argued strongly by authors such as Falk (Chapter 1), Bawden (Chapter 3), Perkins (Chapter 5) and Bradbery et al. (Chapter 12) who conclude that successful communities in this context are those which learn and in the process create the social capital necessary to underpin a learning society. Many chapters such as Falk (Chapter 1), Courvisanos (Chapter 2) and Moore et al. (Chapter 13) provide a persuasive case for learning communities and the presence of social capital as a necessary condition for the operation of a market-based economy. Such communities can build on experience, adapt to massive change and capture opportunities for growth. This is an upward spiral, still involving the market mechanism and outward looking policies, but within a wider, holistic social and institutional setting.

While numerous articles and papers elsewhere have addressed the three primary aspects of sustainability, less attention has gone to how to integrate these three aspects in furthering

sustainable regional development. Geno (Chapter 4) reviews efforts which have been made to develop regional level environmental management schemes which seek social, environmental and economic sustainability. In these schemes, the components of sustainability are largely viewed in a hierarchical manner and the aspects of environmental sustainability and economic viability tend to take on a greater level of importance. The issues of social sustainability are often left to be operationalised at the national level. However, Geno (Chapter 4) shows the concepts of human ecology may be applied to the challenge of integrating the social and economic aspects of sustainability at the regional level and developing associated policy measures. Social impact analysis offers a technique to operationalise social sustainability at the community, or regional level. These social approaches to sustainability serve to provide mechanisms for truly integrating the social, economic and environmental aspects of sustainability.

An ecological framework for sustainable community psychology, planning, learning, development and social capital for economically sustainable development is presented by Perkins (Chapter 5). Two examples of sustainable development in the USA are briefly discussed, both involving concepts of community planning: co-housing and the 'new urbanism'. A participatory action research process and 'service-learning' are discussed as a means to generate collaborative 'learning communities'. It is concluded that sustainability should be defined not only in economic and traditional ecological terms, but also in terms of a social ecology that includes the development of community psychological ties (sense of community, communitarianism, place attachment, pride in one's home and community, community confidence and satisfaction), as well as neighbouring, citizen participation, and organisational efficacy.

Regional development has, in the past, paid little attention to the spiritual or social context, or indeed the human interconnectedness of the region. Bradbery et al. (Chapter 12) move beyond (rational) economics and ecological impact statements to the concepts and practices of civil society or social capital. Some attention is beginning to be given to these concepts in areas such as the arts (see Chapter 15 by Kingma) and in the development of regional agreements for Aboriginal/Torres Strait Islander sites (ALGA 1999; ATSIC 2001). In Bradbery et al's paper, the importance of including such additional dimensions in planning and implementing development is identified. It is argued that sustainable development of a region of necessity includes consideration of the natural, human and spiritual resources of the region. The paper provides some techniques and processes which can be useful in the discernment of the spiritual resources of the region.

Key themes for change

The theme of this book is that of learning. An ethos of active and self-directed learning is the only way in which individuals and society can manage change in an inclusive and equitable fashion. Learning needs to permeate all aspects of lives if the response to change is to be a positive influence on the wider community—that is learning needs to be actively encouraged on the part of individuals, groups, organisations and communities.

The kind of learning being discussed in the preceding chapters varies. There is no one 'right' kind of learning—in fact only the integration of formal, non-formal and informal kinds of learning will achieve the kinds of outcomes muted in these pages, namely a stronger, responsive and proactive regional socioeconomy for Australia. The additional benefit of the physical infrastructure afforded by formal and non-formal institutions and organisations, especially educational and training ones (schools, TAFE institutes, and Community Education providers) is highly important for regional socioeconomic viability.

With conceptual challenges facing rural Australia identified, several authors then explore a number of themes, which will be central to a new approach to developing community strength. Key themes identified in the chapters of this book are the different approaches to learning, education and training, pathways for community education and learning, creating learning organisations at the local level, empowering of small business, women and new roles for youth in creating social capital, and the theme of building of learning teams and groups. Issues such as the role of leadership and volunteerism are discussed as well as integrative planning processes which include spiritual impact statements as a neglected dimension of a holistic society. Such spiritual impact statements as discussed by Bradbery et al. (Chapter 12) must be part of a holistic approach to developing community strength, along with economic, environmental and social considerations.

In regions and countries experiencing economic problems, the use of education and schools to enhance economic development often leads to narrow forms of vocational education and training. Grubb (Chapter 6) argues this tactic is usually counter-productive, and services neither employers nor youth well. He outlines a broader and more integrated approach to occupational preparation, linking youth to both school and future employment. The importance of concepts such as these, and the above themes, is supported by the recent Rural Industries Working Group (Commonwealth of Australia 2001) on learning needs for rural Australia.

Williamson and Marsh (Chapter 7) discuss pathways for education and training. One of the unfortunate aspects of the labour market at present is the high level of youth unemployment. Policies and strategies to counteract this have had a major effect on the development of young people and their transition to adulthood. The implications from these strategies are discussed for young people in regional Tasmania reaching school age (completion of Grade 10).

The potential of new communication and information technologies in the revitalisation of regional communities is discussed by Grace (Chapter 8) in relation to empowering women. Much remains to be understood about the factors which contribute to the success of innovative technology applications in these communities and ways in which such success might be measured. Research conducted by the Queensland University of Technology (QUT) indicates gender significantly affects not only access and use of communication and information technologies, but also rural community development. By focusing on rural women's perspectives on communication issues, this research has revealed a need for the development of 'soft' technologies to ensure that both social and economic development occurs in an integrated way in regional, rural and remote communities.

Disability-based organisations, in general, have traditionally provided care, support, work, and occupations for people with disabilities in a system supported by subsidies from government and charity from the community. Griggs (Chapter 9) outlines an innovative model developed for regional disability-based organisations. Managers and boards of management of many of these organisations have decided that the way to manage the change is to be more responsible for their own destiny and to base their operations on commercially viable businesses. The management base for this new paradigm needs to be strengthened, as evidenced by a recent profile of northern and central Victorian non-government disability sector managers. Griggs's paper examines these issues. It concludes that organisations which are either unable or unwilling to make the necessary adjustments in their management

education and training philosophies and practices, may find that this will lead to the erosion of efficiency and effectiveness in the community.

Small business barely has a voice in rural Australia, especially in connection with its particular needs for learning and training. Kilpatrick and Bell (Chapter 10) summarise a number of studies which have focused on the needs for distinctive training and learning responses for rural small business. They set out the crucial requirements of that sector, and suggest some solutions to the challenges of learning and contributing, in a two-way fashion, to the community. The importance of social capital in achieving the required outcomes is highlighted.

Kasl's (Chapter 11) work on understanding small teams and their capacities to learn is key to understanding organisational capacity for creative engagement in the community and in business. The critical role of the team in creating learning organisations is equally useful in understanding how small groups can be the building blocks in community and regional learning and development, as well as in transformative change. Kasl describes strategies for small-group learning and offers a vision for how community learning practitioners might support small group learning.

Communities and social capital

Social capital has been identified in this book as the networks, norms, trust, and bonding, bridging and linking ties involved in working together. Its hallmarks are inclusiveness, cooperation and sharing. It is the glue of relationships and facilitates economic and social activity. The capacity to learn, and motivate and activate knowledge is dependent upon the stock of positive social capital.

Growth of social capital is dependent upon institutional and policy settings. It is institutional settings within which markets work, which give expression to economic and social behaviour and within which communities attempt to maintain social structures. Where authority, institutions and power, whether associated with government or (large scale) business, are remote and determined outside communities, there is a potential to contradict important social, cultural and spiritual values and undermine social capital and the ability of communities to 'learn'.

Communities which have been able to retain some power over institutions and the power base, have a good chance of being successful in reversing the community's fortunes. However, even where circumstances are favourable, a catalyst is often required to make the necessary changes. A growing number of practitioners and professional people have made it their business to ensure such catalytic support is available and to assist communities to develop new approaches to empowerment. These community developers come from fields as diverse as economics, social work, environmental studies, social ecology, social capital, rural sociology, health, local government, town planning, engineering and architecture, representing a truly cross-sectoral profession. In this book a number of success stories are reviewed to illustrate the potential of these new approaches and to support the above themes of the book.

Moore et al. (Chapter 13) provide insight into some international models of success in regional development while Muktasam and Chamala (Chapter 14) discuss a group action learning model for sustainable rural communities using the Indonesian Rural Community Development Program. These authors illustrate how action learning takes place within groups and how the participatory action research methodology stimulates the action learning

process. Group approaches for rural community development include many types and numbers of groups yielding rich lessons for community development.

Wyn and Stokes (Chapter 16) build upon the work of Williamson and Marsh (Chapter 7) by addressing the barriers to wellbeing and participation, which face young people in rural Australia, and the responses by rural communities to these issues. Mulraney and Turner (Chapter 17) discuss the role of young people in renewing regional communities. For example, the NAREET (Northern Adelaide Regional Education Employment and Training) Network has put structures in place that have encouraged educators and trainers at all levels to work collaboratively with community and industry stakeholders on the issue of full youth employment. The learning community partnership approach is evolving into a very successful model. Structural reform of the labour market, combined with the rapid change in information technology and communication systems, has led many young people to be very uncertain about what the future holds for them.

Education in the 1990s is about supporting young people to shape a future for themselves next century and learning how to be in control of their own future (Commonwealth of Australia 2001). As we shift out of the passive, benefit-orientated welfare system towards a regional skill and wealth building approach to economic and employment development (Commonwealth of Australia 2000), it becomes increasingly obvious that more active, locally sensitive measures are needed. Regional approaches are developing that are giving more coherence and effectiveness to public sector programmes (particularly in education and training) and moving towards measures promoting entrepreneurship, job creation and innovation (Mulraney and Turner, Chapter 17). This is leading to more active promotion and development of the local labour market, and efforts to make explicit the skills required, as well as pathways to acquire these skills.

Bowles (Chapter 18) builds on the work of Kilpatrick and Bell (Chapter 10) by discussing the positive outcomes which can result when the business sector invests in the community. He shows how business and community partnerships have pay-offs for all the partners. In this case, a major school in regional Australia has worked closely with local businesses, the education and training authorities and the wider community, to achieve a sustainable model of a learning community with rewards for all.

Arnott and Benson (Chapter 19) explore the learning processes of pastoralist stakeholders in a case study of education and learning in the tropical savannas. In this case, difficulties in communication between landholders, government departments and other research centres led to research on experiential and informal learning, formal training, and use of information technologies. Results have been useful to all stakeholders.

Balatti (Chapter 20) explains how a learning community in a remote mine site was established to develop literacy and other communication skills of employees. Collaboration between the Tropical North Queensland Institute of TAFE and mine management produced a peer-tutoring model that was successfully implemented in a work site that had thwarted all previous attempts in meeting those same communication training needs. This learning partnership proved to be a catalyst for learning experiences and partnerships extending well beyond what had been envisaged.

Bruce (Chapter 21) describes the building of social capital and community-learning networks in community Internet access centres in Canada. Development of a highly Internet- and computer-literate community was a catalyst in capturing emerging employment and

social opportunities. Community access centres in all rural communities and small towns lead to the emergence of new networks among individuals and organisations at all levels, through which new social capital and skills can be introduced. Issues of use of voluntary labour and involvement of government are raised as important issues.

MacManamey, Falk, Bruce and others (Chapter 22) use stories from newspapers and health centres to promote community projects. For example, in one campaign the media raised the self-concept or identity and the level of economic activity of the northern region of Tasmania. A Centre located at the University linked with the newspaper staff to fund a project to help develop the 'Believe It!' campaign. This unusual partnership is already making a significant impact on a region through drawing on a 'social capital' evaluation model based on knowledge and common resources and identity-building resources in the communities that make up the region. In another campaign, lessons learned on business planning to establish four neighbourhood Community Health Centres in Canada, were publicised with resulting benefits in the wider community.

New concepts of 'situated leadership' are discussed by Falk and Mulford (Chapter 23). They argue that traditional practices and ideas of leadership must quickly give way to radical, new models of leadership.

Kingma (Chapter 15) illustrates how the principles of community cultural development (CCD) can be fostered and applied through catalytic government programs for the arts. Case studies from the CCD Fund of the Australia Council for the Arts are drawn upon to paint a rich set of guidelines for community empowerment. The creative arts can help accelerate change because they foster those community social, cultural and business processes, relationships and concepts of work required to achieve a shift to sustainability.

A way forward

This book has provided a much needed insight into ways in which communities can rise above the disenfranchisement that results from exposure to extreme change and current economic and social policies and institutions. The focus of the book has been on success stories but within an innovative conceptual framework of systems theory and the principles and concepts emerging from the research on learning communities and social capital.

The chapters by Courvisanos, Bawden, Geno, Kilpatrick and Bell, and Mulford and Falk carry the implication that, to be effective (and as a precondition for the success of economic policies), regional businesses and communities must become 'learning businesses and communities' based on knowledge intensive firms operating through continuous improvement and regeneration of organisational structures and networks. These businesses and communities must have strong linkages to the wider economy. Commercial activity must be supported by networked, informed and skilled local communities. There must be enabling leadership within the community upon which to structure partnerships, resolve conflict through dialogue and build cooperation.

In regional economies, establishment of an institutional environment conducive to innovative business and social investment is probably the most important factor influencing growth. Apart from structural adjustment, areas of relevance are new forms of competitiveness, regional leadership and management of processes for change, and generation of civic or social capital required for successful business and social activity.

An important argument in favour of an increased role for governments in supporting industry development in regions is identified in the chapter by Courvisanos, which builds upon the 'Porter philosophy' in which four sets of variables are seen to act to create an environment conducive to creation of competitive advantage. These four variables are:

- the relative endowment of the region with respect to other regions;
- the size and quality of the home market;
- the connections within the region with complementary and supporting industries which are already competitive including skills of suppliers, consumer demand, formal and informal networks and the structured support of public bodies, and
- the organisational structure of firms which influences their capacity to change.

Porter (1990) argued that successful industries have strong linkages, for example, to buyers, suppliers, customers, technology and networks, and that these linkages work best where industries are geographically concentrated or clustered. These firms and industries are best able to achieve external economies through participation and partnership at all levels.

The (trade-based Porter) model may not work as effectively in Australian conditions where local market size is small compared with large markets such as in the USA. The degree to which business enterprises can become embedded within regions is related to the scale of enterprise and size of firms—large firms and institutions tend to be more detached from the regional community, that is, 'in' the locality not 'of' the locality. The dilemma is that as firms capture economies and become larger, they also become less effective in helping to build social cohesion and unity, so necessary to sustainability. In these circumstances smaller and less economically powerful regions tend to become disempowered, passive and simply nodes in a wider network of power relationships, a point made strongly by Falk in the first chapter of this book.

The institutional settings within which firms operate are, therefore, highly significant and should be a focus for regional policy. In addition, there is a strong argument for government involvement in partnership with industry, to ensure sustainable community development.

The Porter approach, if it is to work, must be accompanied by institutional arrangements which lead to different more socially aware businesses and networks, and by strong local stakeholder processes, partnerships and leadership. Again, governments have an important role to ensure an environment within which these activities can develop.

Regions need to attract skilled workers and high technology firms and have the mechanisms in place to retain them and encourage learning in the local economy. In turn, regional communities must be able to provide the environment not only to attract knowledge but also to retain and embed this into local economies. Communities become more than connective physical infrastructure, rather, the places that provide competencies and connections. This social or collaborative infrastructure is essential to improving the knowledge base and cohesiveness of local economies.

The sense of 'place' implied in the above, is the complex of intangible characteristics of a community that make it attractive to actual and potential residents, and determine the degree to which participants can grasp opportunities and create wealth. This concept extends to firms and industries connected through 'virtual place'. Economic and social prosperity is easier to achieve where communities embody a substantial stock of this social capital.

Values, aspiration and inspiration are strongly linked to the structures, mechanisms, accountability arrangements and political and institutional settings. All these factors contribute to more effective and efficient business structures, and private sector investment and risk sharing. Ways to influence these factors at the community level will have a high commercial and social payoff, meaning that higher, more socially optimal levels of business investment, are possible with some supporting input and involvement of governments.

Empowered, learning organisations and communities, which build on their social capital, will be highly effective in:

- achieving successful change;
- generating the climate of participation necessary for the government's welfare reforms to succeed;
- lowering transactions costs associated with economic and social activity;
- attracting new investment and creating partnerships with the private sector;
- developing inclusive stakeholder processes at all levels which work to minimise conflict and gain community agreement, and
- building local capacity for innovation and sustainability.

Presence of a good stock of social capital in the community is central to achieving growth. Social capital is not only an important means for bringing about required change but it is also the product of such change. Presence of a good stock of social capital in communities will generate an upward spiral of positive change, which integrates economic, environmental and social issues and has the characteristics of cooperation, tolerance, equity and community. The fact that a strong community precedes and is the precondition for strong and sustainable economic growth, is pointed out in several chapters, including that of Geno, and Bradbery et al.

Where strong communities in regions are not evolving then, if perceived to be important in terms of efficient economic allocation of resources or in terms of achieving social goals associated with the vision and values discussed in Bradbery, Fletcher and Molloy's chapter, there is a case for government and community involvement for local empowerment. Such enabling (social) support could be directed towards:

- fostering community capacity building and learning;
- encouraging enabling and participative leadership;
- facilitating the growth of learning organisations, communities and, more recently, regional centres and cities;
- generating effective relationships, networks and multi-stakeholder processes;
- generating (two-way) information and knowledge flows for business, community and government decision making;
- empowering women and minority groups as key drivers of the inclusive values noted above and their commitment to integrated, holistic processes of growth, and
- supporting the creative arts as a basis for bridging the gap between narrow, profit-based activity and broader socially useful activities.

Enabling support for communities will, of itself, create the environment for revival of local institutions and organisational structures. Where feasible, additional ways, which will help in the redesign of public policy to achieve this, are:

- re-examination of governance at all levels;
- assessment of the costs of access and connectivity to resources and management structures (including IT) in local communities;
- devolution of power and responsibility to regional communities, and
- analysis of processes, accountability arrangements, regulations and administrative machinery which tend towards uniformity and control at levels beyond 'locality'.

The reports in this book show that the trust and social cohesion aspects of social capital are *requirements* for people to become participants in all manner of economic and social activities. The skills associated with human capital are not sufficient for achieving outcomes by themselves. In the case of learning, education and training, when human capital (behaviour of individuals) and social capital (behaviour of collectives that facilitate action) are combined, outcomes are perceived as more effective. By bringing human and social capital together, the capacity of people to learn and respond to change is increased. Moreover, learning is initiated by self-confidence and self-esteem, characteristics that are embedded in the learning process and are the prime enablers of participation in learning and essential ingredients for positively managing the forces of change.

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The theme of *Learning to manage change: Developing regional communities for a local-global millennium* is that Australia should become a learning society in order to build capacity and manage regional change for social and economic benefit for all. Learning is viewed as the integration of formal, non-formal and informal education and training. Dynamic and purposeful learning produces social capital, and social capital produces economic as well as social and personal benefits. Learning is a process of adapting to change while retaining the power to sort and sift the available information so as to meaningfully control our lives in the learning communities in which we live. Learning communities—groups of people who work in dynamic partnership to decide on and manage their futures—are those that will survive as vibrant and productive leaders.

The contributing authors share the roles of providing leading-edge information, analysis of issues and hundreds of best practice examples of building strong communities through active and critical learning.

Six of the contributors are experts from the USA and Canada: Professor Richard Bawden (formerly Australia, now USA), Professor Rusty Brooks (USA), Mr David Bruce (Canada), Professor Norton Grubb (USA), Professor Bernie Moore (USA), Professor Douglas Perkins (USA). The remaining contributors are from all parts of Australia. The contributions expose and explore some of the significant issues and practical solutions for developing complex communities under contemporary forces for change. There are particular and significant implications for an integrated approach to education and training at the regional level.

'The chapters provide a rich and provocative blend of information, practical wisdom and issues-based discussions that reflect the variation and complexity of managing change in rural communities of the new millennium.' Professor John Allen, Center for Rural Community Revitalization and Development, University of Nebraska, Lincoln, NE USA.

ISBN 0 7397 752 1